"Knight_of_Ren: Editor looking to workshop new pieces. Will give thought-out, professional feedback. Publication not guaranteed.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Prof is a dick. Not supporting student's creative writing. Desperate need for feedback. Can I send you my non-fiction piece?

Knight_of_Ren: Sure."
When Rey Kenobi's professor and advisor, Luke Skywalker, refuses to give constructive criticism or facilitate workshops for his students, she decides to seek help elsewhere. Ben Solo (or if you read his published work, Kylo Ren) is on the brink of insanity. The literary magazine he is editor for is racing off in a new direction— and is leaving him questioning both its morals and his love for writing. To find his intellectual and creative needs met, he decides to turn to the internet.

A PenPals AU no one asked for.

Notes

I have absolutely no chill what so ever. I have too many ideas and I need to get them out before I second guess them and never post. So heres a preview for a fic that is floating around in my head.
****New Readers can go ahead and skip this chapter! It was meant to be a preview. None of what happens in this chapter actually occurs in the fic. So feel free to skip ahead to Chapter 2: You Need a Teacher!****

---

From Knight_of_Ren:

This is not awful. You need to rewrite the opening. It sounds like you were clearing your throat on the page....

In the auto shop office, Rey’s eyes skimmed the rest of the ridiculously long email. Her lunch break was only thirty minutes, not enough time to read it all, but enough to start ruminating on some of Ren’s comments. On good days his comments were mostly knit-picky, but sometimes...he shredded her paper until it was bleeding with ink.

Honestly, one time he mailed her a physical copy of her manuscript, covered with bright red ink. Beautiful penmanship, but the exquisite slants and curves communicated scathing words that would make a sailor blush. Needless to say, she regretted ever giving him her address.

“Hey kid, I need the oil changed on the Jefferson’s car!” Her boss’ gruff voice called out from the depths of the garage. Rey pocketed her phone in her jumpsuit; she still had three more hours left in her shift. Responding to Ren would have to wait.

Ben checked his phone again. Still no reply.

He knew Kenobi worked odd hours and was attending undergraduate, her sporadic emails were not a surprise, nor her bouts of radio silence. Yet, he wanted to know her thoughts on his comments.

He clenched his fist; he was not going to check again. No.

Maybe he can call her later...no that would be too imposing. They had only talked over the phone maybe once or twice, and both had been because of minor emergencies.

Mostly Kenobi freaking out over turning in her assignments to her advisor. The girl did not give herself enough credit, Ben needing to give her the extra push to turn in her creative work.

Determined to forget about the email he sent, Ben picked up the piece he was supposed to be reading. It was another piece on the influence of global warming, and how it was a hoax. Ben had to reread that paragraph at least five times. Snoke wanted to publish this?

He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose—when did First Order Literary become a politically charged and controversial literary magazine? This was not what Ben signed up for.
“I graded the remaining short stories. I can honestly say, I am not surprised by the outcome,” Dr. Skywalker droned to the class of twelve students.

Skirting by Rey’s desk, the fifty-four year old man unceremoniously dropped her short-story packet on the desk. With every ounce of her being, she refrained from flipping to the last page to see her grade.

“Please if you have a problem with your grade, do not come whining to me. I suggest rereading your work,” he warned, bored with the task.

He plopped the last packet on Rose Tico’s desk.

The twelve students waited with baited breath.

It was no secret Dr. Luke Skywalker was a living legend, his written work *The Only Hope: A Jedi’s Tale* one the most popular books at its release, not to mention required reading for most higher level literature courses. From his success, he developed a craft technique, compilation exercise and guidelines in his book *The Path of the Jedi: A Study of Writing*, his methods studied around the globe. To be selected for his two semester long creative writing seminar was an honor.

Young, hardened, and searching for escape, Rey spent most of her adolescence camped out in the library. From the age of thirteen, she’d take the afternoon bus to get out to the ghost-town suburbs into the city. Rey spent hours in hidden corner of the library reading and rereading all of Skywalker’s work. From his popular books (*The Only Hope* and its sequel *Never Tell Me the Odds*) to his short-story collections and novellas (*Stardust* became an instant favorite of hers, Rey searching high and low for her own copy after reading the library’s) all the way into his obscure Non-Fiction pieces he wrote nearly ten years ago (*A Nephew’s Fear* and *Pilots, Princesses, & Predestinations*) kept Rey awake at night. For many nights, calculating and recounting every possible way his nephew could have changed, or turned back. She did not want to believe everything discussed in the essays…yet the genre was Non-Fiction).

“You’re dismissed.”

Once the bearded, raggedy man slipped out of the classroom, all the students flipped over their
A series of groans echoed in the small study room they used as their weekly meeting space.

A bold 25/100 was circled in bright green (“Red scares students—I use green to make the pain of a bad grade less bitter.” Dr. Skywalker announced on the first day of class). Her stomach dropped into the depths of the unknown—she got an ‘F’ (“I don’t like letter grades because they are a construct created by the obtuse man” Dr. Skywalker announced, flicking through the syllabus. Rey held back a smile. He understood the craft—art could not be put on a scale)?

How the hell did she essentially fail?

Astonishment and confusion boiling into anger, Rey hastily gathered her belongings and followed after the grey haired, clearly half-witted man. Once out of the room and out into the overarching hallway, Rey noticed Dr. Skywalker did not get far, his tweedy coat noticeable in the rare early morning sun.

Jogging up to the man, Rey called out his name. The man paused a moment, before continuing his way to the English Department building. She tried again, only a yard and half away. “Dr. Skywalker.”

The man continued his pace, despite Rey matching his step for step. He did not spare her glance or a twitch of the eye. “Yes, Miss Kenobi?”

Distaste rolled off his tongue at her last name. Embarrassment crept upon her like a forgotten friend she purposely meant to forget. At eighteen, deciding to leave the foster system, Rey changed her last name to her favorite author’s; Benjamin W. Kenobi. He’d been a popular magical realism author in the early sixties, Rey falling head over heels in love with his effortless style of writing. The combinations of structure and serenity in his language soothed her soul as a young girl. At fourteen, she decided ‘Rey Kenobi’ would be her name—not Rachel Jacobs, the name she believed given to her from the first home she lived in.

To give off the air of assurance, Rey tilted her head higher. “I am confused by my grade. I followed the prompt and guidelines, yet I still received a failing score.”

Dr. Skywalker’s deadpan expression did not shift, merely speaking to her as though she were a child. “Miss Kenobi, you did in fact follow the instructions of the assignment, but a large portion of the grade is based on execution and creativity—both of which your work lacks.” He seamlessly continued his walk into the building, intent to leave Rey behind. Though he underestimated her will.

“Dr. Skywalker, what exactly is not creative then? The piece was realism short-story; the plot cannot have fantastical elements. You specifically said that,” Rey recalled the blunt, short list the professor wrote on the board when giving the prompt—No fantasy, no sci-Fi, one realistic location, and two characters. Most of the class struggled to brainstorm in the box of limitations, while Rey went to the basics of conflict. Two opposing forces, two different personalities. The plot easily followed the character’s flaws.

Was it her plot then, was it not intricate enough? “What about the plot or characters did not work. You didn’t specify.” She questioned, going as far as to stride ahead and open the building door for him.

Dr. Skywalker did not acknowledge the respectful gesture, opening the other double door to avoid her. “Miss Kenobi,” She held back at eye roll at his evident displeasure—he spoke her last name
like a macabre scandal. She did not understand his ever apparent dislike for her, this not the first time he’d given her a direct scowl or ridiculed her name and her outspoken comments. His pace did not falter as he addressed her rather harshly, “It had nothing to do with the plot, or the characters. It had everything to do with you.” He declared, stopping in front of his office door at the end of the narrow hall.

Rey tried not to let her mask of fearlessness slide at his admission. “Me?” she uttered meekly, her disappointment colored in her tone. She could only hope it did not bleed into her eyes.

Dr. Skywalker sighed tiredly, rubbing his good hand down his bearded chin. “Kid,” he spoke quietly, the harden legendary writer looking far smaller than he did moments ago. “Creativity cannot be taught. Sure, you got raw talent.” His face twisted with phrase, as though he pictured a distinct face in its association. “And somehow it got you into my seminar, but it won’t be enough. It won’t be enough for any of you.”

With that Dr. Skywalker entered his office, and slammed the door behind him.

Wisps of hair from her buns fell back against her ears, the air-rush from the slammed door brushing across Rey. Her feet stood in place as her hands scrambled to flip through her fiction piece.

The bastard did not mark anything, the white, printed pages pristine as the day she handed the story in. She saw blinding white furry; what they say is true—never meet your heroes because they will only disappoint you. Swallowing the blooming growl in her chest, Rey marched out of the building and into the cool morning air.

She needed a teacher.

And Luke-Fucking-Skywalker was not it.

“ Heard you threw a hissy fit about last month’s publication,” the ginger head moron commented as the two men waited in line at the coffee house. Ben thought he’d make it an hour before he ran into the vapid-snob Armitage Hux, even leaving his apartment fifteen minutes early to avoid his co-worker. “Mr. Snoke was severely displeased.” The Brit’s accent reminded Ben of a hissing snake, though far more nasally and sour than one would imagine.

Every part of him wanted to strangle the man’s neck, but he resorted to his usual weapon; words.

“Fuck off Hux,” Ben spoke clearly and sharp, taking a step forward in line. Not his strongest choice of words, but the profanity got the job done.

Hux huffed at the lack of retaliation from Ben, unamused.

A group of pretentious teens with ironic glasses—the same ones Ben saw every Friday morning—shoved their way into the coffee house, bumping Hux into Ben’s back. The ginger man flustered, indignantly brushing off the invisible dirt from his coat.

“I hate millennials.”

Ben rolled his eyes at Hux’s grumbling. Being in the city area had its ups and downs; it just so happened there were more downs than ups, Ben constantly faced with suits, tourists, and people of
all ages.

He’d prefer the quiet-small town, like the one grew up in…yet those thoughts led to some unpleasant memories. He moved across the country to get away from all the family…conflicts.

Ben moved forward in line, and ordered his white mocha latte—relishing the disgusted sneer Hux sent him. Most thought because he dressed like the prince of darkness and had aggressive emotional bursts he’d drink black coffee, ‘dark like his soul’ if you will. Instead, Ben usually ordered a heavy-sugary drink, unable to stand the bitterness of coffee on his tongue. He had a sweet-tooth, one that few knew or noticed.

He moved off to the side, next to the pick-up counter, Hux standing beside him once the ginger haired man ordered his drink.

“All I’m saying is word got around that you are not happy with the journal,” Hux continued on the dropped subject, sounding agitated and concerned despite the twisted look of on his face.

The two men rarely got along, yet shared experience brought a seven year long friendship. Something about attending grad-school together, then both working their way up in the First Order Journal created this strange comradery. More often than not, they looked out for each other—in their own bizarre way—once they were no longer rivals.

“Well, I’m not happy,” Ben said bluntly, not one ounce of hesitance in his tone.

“Our employees don’t need to know that,” Hux reminded him. “Nor do the higher ups. You might be an editor Ben, but Snoke and his Praetorian Circle currently owns the journal, not to mention fund it.”

Ben bit back a remark at the use of his birth name; in the literary world Ben was known as ‘Kylo Ren’. Not by choice, but by necessity. With name like ‘Solo,’ connections between his mother, father, and uncle would easily be made. Ben need to be his own person, at very least in his work. He sometimes forgot Hux knew him long enough to use his actual name.

“Ben, you can’t fight Snoke on every article or piece. It’s exhausting to witness, not to mention it makes us—the other editors, your colleagues — look awful.”

Ben’s hand clenched. For the last few months, the office had been tense. Ever since the previous editor in chief, Dr. Vader, passed away there had been some friction within the company. The older man had been one of the last living founders of the journal, and had remaining shares within the company—though these rights to the company were to be given to his grandson…

Who no one had been able to find.

No one in the company even knew Vader had children, let alone grandchildren.

Due to this, Snoke collected both positions of Editor-in-chief and publisher, the hunt for Vader’s grandson still looming over their heads. If the kid was found, practically half the company would be his. This would leave Snoke in the dust, as he only held positions within the company and not legal power. The only heavy hand he held with his employees was the funding, the shriveled man bringing in stuffy suits from Wall Street to fund his endeavors in the company.

At first, Ben tried to take the shift in power in stride, yet as time passed, he struggled to respect Snoke. Dr. Vader had been Ben’s mentor, picking him straight from grad-school to be a proof-reader. The older man was wise with sorrow, and often spoke to Ben the importance telling the ugly truth of the world through writing. Art was meant to be a reflection of the world, their job as
artists to reveal both the wondrous beauty and grotesque nature of humans and society.

To know the company was purposefully disregarding Dr. Vader’s statements, Ben felt he was letting the man down; tainting his memory. He couldn’t let his mentor’s work and legacy crumble into ashes at the feet of power hungry publishers. If that meant arguing until his face was red and possibly putting his job on the line to get Vader’s true vision back into the journal, then so be it.

“So we’re just going to publish garbage to remain funded?” Ben asked rhetorically, shoving his hands into his coat pockets. “That’s bullshit.”

Hux squinted at Ben. “For an asshole, you sure are naïve.”

The taller man did not argue.

Chapter End Notes

We got some disillusionment, conflict, and mystery!
WHO ON EARTH CAN BE VADER’S GRANDSON? *wink, wink*
Ben and Rey are not pen-pals yet, but it’s definitely on the horizon! But we got some background; I’m excited for the dynamics in this fic!
Also, I’ve had profs like Luke where they try not use red ink. Honestly, it does not soften harsh criticism.

Let me know what you think! Kudos and comments are always welcomed ;)

p.s. Working on the chapters of my other fics :) They will be posted soon.
I Can Show You the Ways Of the Force

Chapter Summary

Rey discovers what it is like to be the unwanted friend. Meanwhile, Ben's counselor presents him a challenge.

Chapter Notes

EVERY FIC GETS AN UPDATE THIS WEEKEND!
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This is the third essay he has given back with a low score. There is no way I’ll pass the course if he continues to do this.” Rey frowned into her grey pillow, lifting her eyes to Finn.

Her roommate stood in her bedroom doorway with his arms crossed, his mouth formed in an unsympathetic line. She’d been venting to Finn for the last fifteen minutes, trying to get her frustration out of her system. These negative, unproductive emotions had been plaguing her for most of the day, to the point her boss, Han Solo, decided it best to send her home early for the afternoon. Rey was useless in the shop if she was distracted by her own thoughts.

“Peanut, you know I’d listen to you all day, and I will always be your shoulder to cry on…but I need to play the tough love card,” Finn stated, avoiding eye contact with Rey. “Sure Skywalker sucks. I’m sorry, but complaining about it every time is not going to get you anywhere.”

Rey groaned, smushing her face further into her pillow.

Finn had a point—crying and moaning about how awful Skywalker and her class was not going to solve her problems. It’d only created circular rumination.

“But how the hell am I supposed get constructive criticism? I want to get better!” Her muffled questions caused Finn to shake his head.

“Find a tutor or something?” He suggested offhandedly, his mind clearly somewhere else by his lack of enthusiasm. He shrugged on his tan leather jacket, Rey lifting her head to see him about to leave from the doorway.

“When are you coming back?” she asked, turning her head to the side to breathe better.

Finn pursed his lips, stuffing his fists into his pockets. “Uh, I might not come back tonight.” He shrugged casually, though his rocking from toe to heel broke the act.

The jacket, aftershave, and quick answers suddenly slid together like a puzzle piece.

Finn Storm had a date. His first in almost a year.
Rey sat up, hugging the pillow to her chest. “Do you think you might get—” A smug grin played on her lips when Finn shrugged again, shaking his head a little too much.

Oh, he was totally hoping he’d get laid tonight!

“Oh, my god! Oh, my god!” She cheered flinging the pillow at her roommate. Finn caught the pillow, tossing it back on to Rey’s turquoise bed. “So who is he? Or she? Or them? Do I need to Facebook stalk them? Send them anons on Tumblr? Tell me!” Rey jumped off the bed, gripping Finn’s forearms. “You know you want to tell me,” Rey sang lightly, poking his chest insistently.

“Fine.” Finn broke with a tiny, shy smile. He was not one to share much about his romantic life, even to Rey, who had been one of his longest lasting friends. She did not even find out about Poe until he and Finn were celebrating their six month anniversary. “Her name is Rose. She works at Pho-tastic down Steppe Dr., you know the one with more Asian fusion we know what to do with?”

A brilliant grin lit up Rey’s face. “I know Rose! Rose Tico?”

“Yeah…” Finn answered cautiously. “How do you know her?”

“She’s in my seminar—”

“No,” Finn groaned stepping out of Rey’s grasp.

Puzzled by the instantaneous mood change, Rey stepped back. Her roommate then trudged down the hall, she following after him.

“I knew it was too good to be true,” he muttered heading past the kitchenette to the front door. Rey scoffed, confused by Finn’s sudden frustration. She stopped in front of him, the man turning back around to face her.

“Finn, why is it a problem? She’s a wonderful human being,” Rey praised, always a fan of the tiny woman who sat in the back of most of her creative writing classes. Rose was quiet, but diligent. Her pieces were usually short non-fiction, but had exquisite detail. Part of Rey wondered how Rose fared with the assignment, the prompt out of her comfort zone.

Finn pinched his nose, his free hand resting on his hips. “Rey, you’re my best friend.” She nodded, though found it odd Finn needed to state the fact. “But…I think, since we’ve moved in together, you’ve been using me as a crutch,” Rey blinked back, her facial reaction and brain not quite syncing up.

She did not know how to compute or respond to Finn’s statement.

Was this an argument?

But she and Finn did not have arguments, and as far as arguments go, this one was relatively calm. Though that may have been her doing because she’d been a little stunned by the accusation.

“And I have been using you as a crutch too!” Finn backpedaled. “I moved in because Poe and I broke up, and Jessika graduated so you needed a roommate. We said we wouldn’t let this affect our friendship…but you are too invested.” Finn slumped, the weight of his words bring him down. “Well, too invested in my life.”

“Oh,” Rey uttered a series of emotions flickering across her face.
Initially, she’d been confused by the accusation, then angry, now she felt awkward—did she really butt into Finn’s life too much? Sure she called to check in on him, and kind of became the personal bodyguard of his heart since he and Poe broke up—but it was her job as his best friend! She had to look out for Finn’s gentle soul!

“If I was becoming a bother or whatever.” She shook her head, a strained smile pulling taut on her lips. “You could have just said something.” Rey tried to tell him nonchalantly picking at the hem of her favorite beige sweater.

Finn sighed. “It’s not that…I just—I want to go on dates, and not have you hover.” He cringed as Rey rose an eyebrow at him. “Poor word choice, that’s why you are the writer in this friendship!” Finn joked, but Rey did not find his attempts of lighthearted jesting amusing. “I mean, I’d like to go out with people who you don’t know—expand my circle. Be more than ‘Finn: spunky Rey’s best friend’. And I really thought I’d get that with Rose.”

She gulped, not realizing she might have been the dominate friend—because honestly she did not see it. It was no secret Rey was an extremely involved individual—she worked at the Millennium Auto Shop, was one of the editors for the university newspaper, and was a volunteer at the local animal shelter. Rey simply happened to know a large conglomeration of people…but that didn’t mean she was friends with any of them. They were acquaintances; Finn and Poe and Jessika were her friends!

Yet that might be stretching truth—

For the last three weeks, Rey and Jessika had been playing phone tag, which was ridiculous because it wasn’t as though they lived in two different time zones. Jessika lived a little over an hour away. Not to mention, the last time they got together was for Rey’s birthday, in May. They were now in the middle of September.

Rey rarely spoke to Poe, despite being friends before he and Finn dated. They had met while working at the auto shop together, Rey the little matchmaker for the two. Foolishly, she thought she had to pick a side. She still stalked his social media—just to make sure he was suffering as much as Finn—

Okay maybe Finn had a point of her being too involved in his life.

“Rey, honestly. I just don’t think we should share every aspect of our lives together. You get that don’t you?” Rey nodded jerkily, waving him off.

“Yup, I get you. I totally understand, um,” she swallowed, ignoring the pin-pricks of disappointment in her gut, “Go, go and have fun on your date. I won’t say anything more—or google search her or anything.” Rey stumbled through her words, watching Finn slowly back out the room, more so to flee the situation rather than go to his date Rey presumed.

“Ok, thanks Rey.”

Finn departed with a half salute, ducking out the front door swiftly. The door slammed tightly in his wake, leaving Rey standing in the middle of their tiny living room.

Did…did she just get friend dumped?
“And tell me, how does this environment make you feel?” Ben’s purple haired counselor asked, her pen poised at the ready over her legal pad.

Ben licked his lips, hugging the red pillow closer to his chest. “Furious. Annoyed…”

Dr. Amilyn Holdo nodded, her gentle demeanor not once wavering as Ben raged and growled.

He’d gone through five other counselors and therapists before he finally decided to forfeit and go to Amilyn.

When he started going to counselling—per his mother’s urging after everything that transpired with his uncle—the first name on this list was Dr. Amilyn Holdo. The tall, elegant, soft spoken woman had been his mother’s friend for as long as Ben could remember; naturally she wanted to help. The stubborn nature of both his mother and father were rooted in him, and Ben refused… until every single counsellor or therapist he went to turned out to not be much help; the professionals only nodded their head with noncommittal hum, or worse, tried to fix him.

Ben did not want to be fixed; he wanted a manual in how to operate his mind and emotions.

Amilyn was a god send, even bending some rules for him; technically she planned on retiring when Ben sought her out.

“What else? It can’t just be pent up anger in there Ben,” she probed, her accepting eyes focused on him.

He leaned back, his head resting on the back of the coffee brown sofa. “I guess… I’m disappointed,” he admitted, hearing the distinct strokes of Amilyn’s purple pen on the yellow paper. “I thought Vader was going to be around for a while… I thought I’d learn more from him.”

He lifted his head to see Amilyn gazing off into the corner, lost in her own thought.

She did that often, not that Ben minded; it gave him a break from sitting through his sand dunes of emotions.

She then clicked her pen and set her items on the coffee table between them. Ben sat up, more alert—Amilyn had something to tell him, it’d either be brilliant or her soul searching bullshit, no inbetween.

“How long have you been a student Ben? A scholarly type?” she asked rather mildly, not looking to dig, but to make conversation.

While she waited, Amilyn reached for the blue teapot on the coffee table. Ben watched as she prepared them tea, as she usually did towards the end of their sessions. These moments reminded him he did not need to be closed off to her—she knew him too well, seeing him grow up into the man he presented today. His pseudo aunt knew exactly how he liked his tea, three lumps and a dash of cream, as it had been the same since he was six.

“For most of my life,” he finally answered, taking the offered tea cup with the little chip by the handle.

“So for thirty-one years, or twenty-seven if you want to count when you officially started structured education, you have been seeking knowledge, pursuing your education. Through the traditional sense, and then internships and mentorships.” Ben sipped his tea silently, Amilyn putting together a little plate of scones and lady fingers for herself. “I think maybe this is an opportunity to reach out, and be the mentor for once.”
“Excuse me?” Ben set his tea down. “I think you just said you want me to mentor, or even worse teach. I don’t do kids.”

He’d never tell his mother, who was still holding on to the fantasy her son would meet a wonderful woman and have many children, that he in fact hated kids. They were loud, gross, and difficult to manage. Ben didn’t even like kids when he was a kid!

Amilyn chuckled, passing Ben the plate of jammie-dodgers.

“I’m not saying become a teacher Ben or work with children. I am saying you need an outlet.” She did have a point; his current job was not fulfilling and he was still bind to a contract for another year. He needed to do something he enjoyed in the realm of writing and editing. “And maybe you should look into mentoring or helping young writers.”

He didn’t agree immediately, deciding the eat cookies and scones for a few more minutes. It could work, helping others…but he didn’t want to interact with anyone or have the journal know he was using his expertise elsewhere.

“So your saying I should, what put an ad on Craigslist or Tumblr or something with ‘Editor is bored out of his mind, send him some manuscripts’?” He joked, the idea sounding more absurd the moment he said it out loud.

Amilyn remained serious, sipping her tea primly.

“Yes.” She smiled, leaving no room for argument. “Do exactly that.”

“ Damn it…” Rey groaned when a spoon full of coffee flavor ice cream dropped on her old The Smiths t-shirt, right on Morrissey’s nose.

Quickly she popped the glob of ice cream into her mouth, while glancing down at her now stained shirt. Standing up from the sofa, she left her new printed manuscript—the nonfiction piece Dr. Skywalker assigned last week— on the floor with its brothers and sisters while she went on the hunt for paper towel.

When she entered the kitchenette, she ripped off the paper towel from its roll. As she wiped down the stain, her eyes landed on the microwave clock.

Half past two in the morning. Finn was definitely getting laid.

Rey shook her head, the little knots of hair bobbing in the motion. She quickly reminded herself she did not need to helicopter parent her best friend. He was a grown boy who did not need his buff best friend to scare people away...

Scrubbing harder than necessary on her t-shirt, she realized the stain wasn’t getting out. With a huff, Rey threw the crumpled paper towel into the trash bin by the pantry. The offending little piece did not make it into the bin, bouncing back against the rim.

Rolling her eyes at how pathetically annoying the entire situation was, Rey shuffled forward to pick up the balled up paper towel. As she passed her open laptop on the kitchen counter (she wrote he entire non-fiction piece in one sitting at the kitchen counter at seven that evening with a bottle of
red wine), Rey heard a distinct ping. Forgetting about what she had been doing, she went over to her laptop.

Hitting the space bar, she found someone had made a post on *Slate-It*, an online forum Rey decided to join at the spur of the moment four hours previous.

The website was designed to connect people who needed feedback on anything—business proposals, date ideas, cooking suggestions—you name it, someone will probably ask for some feedback on it. Rey played with the idea of asking someone to give her criticism on her next piece, but she wanted to see how the site functioned first. She had tag filters on, specifically anything to do with writing.

So far only a couple of people had commented within the tag, mostly looking for someone to write their term papers for them or make a fake resume.

She was stunned to see some had posted a somewhat legitimate ad for workshopping creative writing.

*Knight_of_Ren:* Editor looking to workshop new pieces. Will give thought-out, professional feedback. Publication not guaranteed.

Rey rubbed her eyes. She must have been dreaming, passed out over her paper. There was no way in this universe she was actually getting something she needed, let alone wanted.

The post was quick and to the point, which was slightly off-putting, but not enough to deter Rey.

Throwing caution out the window, she clicked the ‘reply’ button.

*Scavenger_Kenobi:* Prof is a dick. Not supporting student's creative writing. Desperate need for feedback. Can I send you my non-fiction piece?

Rey hit send before she could rethink her decision. Anxiously, she watched grey dots blipping at the bottom of her comment, indicating whoever the hell *Knight_of_Ren* was saw her message and was replying.

That was quick.

Quicker than she expected.

*Knight_of_Ren:* Sure.

*Knight_of_Ren:* DM me your manuscript. Preferably as a PDF so I don’t accidentally delete all your work.

---

Why the hell did he listen to Amilyn’s crackpot idea?

Ben impatiently tapped the smooth, dark surface of his dining table idly.

He didn’t actually think anyone would respond, and within the first two minutes of the post no less.
Squeezing his eyes shut, Ben took a deep breath.

He hadn’t been able to get sleep, especially with his counsellor’s suggestion roaming around in his brain. When he rolled over in his bed to face his alarm clock and noticed it was already going to be five in the morning, Ben decided to get up and just make the post.

When Scavenger_Kenobi messaged him, Ben wanted to back out and delete the post immediately. He didn’t think anyone would respond; he only joined Slate-It to have proof for Amilyn that he at least tried.

The inevitable should have happened—nobody would take the offer. But clearly someone who read one too many Benjamin W. Kenobi novels decided to take the offer. He was surprised someone even read Kenobi’s work anymore, let alone his most controversial piece The Scavenger & the Lost Prince.

Ben honestly thought he was the only person on Earth who loved the piece.

Apparently, not. And that was enough of an intrigue to warrant a response.

Buzzing with anxious energy, he left his laptop open as he went to go make himself a pot of coffee. Just as he pressed the button, a deep ‘ping’ was heard from his laptop. Leaving the kitchen, Ben bent over the screen once more.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Here— take it, or banish it to the pits of hell.

Ben clicked on the attachment, ignoring the melodramatic nature of the comment. He read the first three lines, then cringed—it wasn’t awful, there was real potential. However, their opening was just plain bad. Not that anyone ever teaches how to write a proper opening, especially to a non-fiction piece.

Another ping.

Scavenger_Kenobi: I take it back, don’t read it. Don’t read anything at all. Its garbage.

Ben frowned, clicking back on the DM dialogue box.

Knight_of_Ren: I’ve only read the first paragraph.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Then stop right there. The entire thing is a sob story about how my best friend essentially friend-dumped me. I wrote it while I was tipsy.

Ben stifled a chuckle into his hand.

This… this was pathetic. Not of her, at least the person sounded like a girl, but for him. Helping a college student not fail their writing course. It seemed stupid, but he sensed a bit of himself. When he first began writing, it was for all the wrong reasons and when he did find the right ones, Ben became reckless. Drunk on his own prose and the effortless power of his words. He wrote when he was upset, with more rage than the page could contain, only to realize what he had done half a second too late.

He needed to calm this kid down.

Knight_of_Ren: Want me to let you in on a little secret? I promise it is not gross or creepy—scout's honor.
Scavenger_Kenobi: What?

Scavenger_Kenobi: Also saying it is ‘not creepy’ does not make it any ‘less creepy’.

He ignored the last message; this person's mouth did not filter through their finger tips.

Knight_of_Ren: A large handful of authors I know—and I am surrounded by them—write half their first drafts either sleep deprived or drunk. You are fine.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Oh.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Thanks.

Knight_of_Ren: No problem. Now stop messaging me so I can actually read your work.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Right!

Scavenger_Kenobi: Shit! Wasn’t supposed to message you!


Ben rolled his eyes, then muted the pinging and moved the dialogue box behind the PDF file. His Saturday morning just got a little bit more interesting.

When I met my roommate, he and I were stuck in the same dreaded Intro to Philosophy course dying of absolute boredom. He offered me a Red Vine at a seven thirty morning lecture and the rest was history. He became my Finnamom Roll and I his Peanut. I quickly learned from our interactions, Finn Storm is the sweetest, most cautious soul on the planet. Though when he has his rarely stern moments, you f*cked the f*ckity f*ck up…

Chapter End Notes

AND THUS THE PEN PAL-SHIP BEGINS!
Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! :)


“Peanut?” Rey grunted into the sofa, ignoring the gentle shake on her shoulder. The intruder shook her shoulder again. “Hey Rey!” Her blanket was roughly yanked off her, Rey blindly reaching for the warm she lost. Blinking her eyes open, Rey flinched at the bright sunlight shining in her eye. A searing headache bloomed in left her temple, the remnants of the previous night cloudy.

She remembered writing. Writing about Finn…

Goddamn it. If this headache persisted she was going to break something, or maybe just eat all the cookies she had stashed behind the bread box. Both were viable options.

“Hey,” Finn’s voice called from further in the apartment. The rich aroma of dark roast coffee began to permeate the living room, Rey humming softly at the comforting smell. “I know you probably had a crazy night of writing,” Frowning, Rey turned her head to the side, trying to catch a glimpse of the rest of the living room over her shoulder.

Her eyes widen; she wrote and edited a shit ton. Pieces of a manuscript laid on the floor cut up into various paragraphs. Little strips of tape lined the floor, along with multiple highlighters.

And her green highlighter was left uncapped. Rey frowned into the worn out sofa cushion; of course she’d leave her favorite highlighter uncapped throughout the night to dry up. She such did love to subconsciously sabotage herself.

“But, you have work in an hour and I figured you’d want to be awake for that.” Finn continued, stepping back into Rey’s line of vision. In one hand he had his ‘Rebel Without A Cause’ mug in one hand, with her ‘A Coffee a Day Keeps My Dark Side Away’ in the other. Silently she took her mug from him, wiggling until her back was properly propped up by the back cushions of the sofa. Despite the available room on the sofa beside Rey, Finn opted to stand. Biting his upper lip, he rocked on the balls of his feet, looking anywhere but Rey. “I also brought doughnuts.” He stated brightly, featuring vaguely to the pink bakers box on the circular dining table. “I got the old fashions, just how you like them.”

Sipping her coffee, Rey tried to tamper down her disgruntled attitude—she wasn’t too sure where she and Finn stood at the moment, and overly-nice-Finn was unsettling.
“Why the hell are you buttering me up?” Rey mumbled into her mug. Groggily, she stood up and made her way to the box of doughnuts. Lazily, she flipped over the lid, plucking out a glazed old fashioned doughnut.

Finn shrugged helplessly, “I…might need to apologize. For how I acted yesterday… and I may have invited Rose over to hang out this afternoon.” He confessed. “So you need to be out of the apartment from six to nine tonight.” He said sheepishly.

Rey swallowed, the warm, freshly made doughnut not as sweet as she expected when accompanied by a temporary eviction.

---

Knight_of_Ren: You misspelled ‘took’ twice.

Knight_of_Ren: And suddenly started writing in third person halfway through the fifth paragraph.

Knight_of_Ren: You weren’t kidding when you said you wrote this tipsy. Though, I’d say it’s more along the lines of pitifully lonely drunk twenty-two year old. I am not sure if that is a genre.

Knight_of_Ren: Wait I am confused—did you and this guy date? Or was it like a love from afar, because I am not getting a romantic expression from this…more along the lines of nagging grandmother.

Knight_of_Ren: Not that a nagging grandmother is bad.

Knight_of_Ren: I just don’t know if you want that as you narrative voice.

Knight_of_Ren: Actually, your narrative voice is kind of all over the place. Have you ever—

Rey loudly slammed her laptop shut. From the vending machine, Snap sent her a dirty look, as though she had been disrupting the peace of the other people in the break room. Which was stupid since they were the only two there. The scrawny dweeb (Han said he only hired him because he owed the kid’s father a favor. Rey decided she never wanted to owe anyone anything if it meant being stuck with a guy like Snap as an employee) picked up his packet of vanilla wafers—of course a knob like him would eat vanilla wafers—and left the room with a long, melodramatic huff.

Pursing her lips, Rey glared at her laptop.

Was she fucking insane last night? Was there something in those frozen pork taquitos she found in the back of the freezer…like ammonia, that possessed her to contact a complete stranger and hand out her garbage of a manuscript like it was a flyer to a shady burger joint?

Lifting her eyes away, her hazel gaze settled on the clock above the doorway. Half past six—she finished her shift a half hour ago, and did not have the leisure to go home and take a nap in her own bed. Han told her she could hang out in the break room until shop closed, but something about sitting in a dim, off white tinge room on a Saturday night caused more self-sorrow than Rey was equipped to handle.

Rey decided to be a big girl and try again.
Ben blinked blearily at his laptop screen. He’d been in the middle of watching the third season of *The Walking Dead* on Netflix when the little dialogue box popped up, pausing the episode in the middle of Michonne stabbing a walker.

*Knight_of_Ren: You said it was garbage, but you did not tell me it is unsalvageable.*

He typed out his response quickly. He clicked the box closed to have it pop up a second later.

*Scavenge_Kenobi: Unsalvageable!*

*Scavenge_Kenobi: I defy that sir!*

*Scavenge_Kenobi: Wait, you are a ‘sir’ right? Or have I just greatly offended you?*

Sitting up, Ben glanced at the digital clock on his nightstand. It was half past nine; he should be going to sleep soon, especially since he had not slept in over thirty-six hours. Yet…this kid’s piece had been bothering him all day, and she was finally replying to his messages. For the first few hours, Ben assumed the writer was either asleep or busy—wherever they were, they were a college student on the weekend. Most definitely they had plans. Which this stream of silence led Ben to find his own sources of entertainment until she responded. He decided to watch more of *The Walking Dead*; it had been suggested to him by several co-workers. Ben attempted to watch it multiple times, only to stop two episodes in. This time he stopped four episodes in.

He then resorted to make himself lunch, a humble chicken and rice combination he threw together from the items in his kitchen. In the midst of cooking, he called his mother, who he begrudgingly told about his little ‘mentor therapy’. She, of course, thought it was *wonderful*.

“I have faith. This is going to be great for you Ben; I think you really miss discussing writing one-on-one.”

Ben rolled his eyes, “Let’s try not to get sentimental about this. She hasn’t even replied to my comments.”

He heard the distinct huff of exasperation from his mother over the line.

“Ben have you ever thought, that maybe you were a little, well *mean* in your comments?” His mother asked. A stubborn response almost left Ben when the reality of her statement ran a little too cool through his bones. “You are not the best communicator, son—I swear you have your father’s lack of filter.”

Ben tensed at the mention of his father. He hadn’t talked to Han Solo in years, nor did he have any desire to reconnect with the man. Last he heard, Han still lived on the west coast, in the little coastal town of Ahch-To working in his auto shop. His parents’ divorce struck a nerve in Ben—he always knew Han and Leia had problems. He’d listen to them screech them at the top of their lungs every night, each yelling match ending with a door slam. They still loved each other despite it all, Ben was sure of that—his parents were ridiculously affectionate and bantered like a well-oiled machine. He never expected his father to pack up and leave to stay at the shop. Nor did he expect his mother to be *okay with it* and move to New York a day and a half later.

The only reason Ben still spoke with his mother was because she reached out a few years after the ‘seminar incident’. 
He decided to hang up, and listen to his mother.

Rereading his messages, Ben realized he might have been a little *harsh*. His job wasn’t to coddle the writer, or hold their hand in the writing process, or even lightly break the bad news of the piece. Ben’s job was to aggressively sift out the flaws, chuck them back to the writer, and order them to fix it within a timely manner.

This clearly wasn’t a professional writer, just a kid who lacked a filter probably as bad as him.

*Knight_of_Ren*: Yes, I am a ‘sir’. And the piece is a mess.

Ben frowned at the screen. A voice in his head, sounding strangely like his mother, reminded him to be nicer.

He’d try again.

*Knight_of_Ren*: But I think you might have something decent, if you take the time to flesh it out.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: It’s the part I talk about the Finn and Poe’s break up isn’t it? At least in I feel like that is the only decent section.

*Knight_of_Ren*: No that part was awful, you didn’t mention yourself once. The assignment is a memoir correct?

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: Yes…

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: But I fucking hate talking about myself.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: Damn it I cursed again. I really hope you aren’t some prude.

Ben rolled his eyes; a writer who hates talking about themselves, that was new.

*Knight_of_Ren*: Then get the fuck over it. Get the fuck over not talking about yourself or being the center of attention.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: No need to get snippety.

*P.S. Nice to know Mr. Regal Grammar has the balls to curse via direct message.*

*Knight_of_Ren*: Stop being a smartass and actually understand what I am trying to explain.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: Fine. But you sound more like a Grade A dick than I gave you credit for.

*Knight_of_Ren*: Well you aren’t doing so great yourself sweetheart.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: Where are you from, the 1950s? No one calls anyone sweetheart.

*Knight_of_Ren*: This is not the point of the conversation—and I was using the phrase ironically. Haven’t you ever heard of irony? It is a great literary device; you should learn how to use sometime.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: I DO KNOW HOW TO USE IRONY! I AM AN ENGLISH MAJOR YOU MONSTER.

*Scavenger_Kenobi*: Wait, did you just try to burn me using grammar and literary devices?
Because that is the nerdiest thing I have ever been subjected to.

Knight_of_Ren: We are extremely off topic. Focus Kenobi.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Right. Yes. Focus.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Which I am doing now.

Knight_of_Ren: Okay...The entire point of a memoir is to write about yourself. The only section you wrote about yourself was the closing, when you mentioned your lack of family.

Knight_of_Ren: As a reader, that intrigued the hell out of me, and left me with questions needing to be answered.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Well I don’t want to write about it.

Rey scowled at her laptop screen.

She hated Ren. She absolutely despised his guts. He was a pompous ass, who thought he knew everything about writing—all the comments he attached to her non-fiction piece via word doc were intense. He ripped her rags of an essay into thread bare shreds. She told him it was garbage, yet he still combed through the piece with a fine tooth. Did Ren honestly not have a sense of compassion or understanding?

“Hey, kid.” Rey turned her head to the sound of Han Solo’s gravelly voice. Her boss was a man in his late sixties or early seventies (he gave her that age range, making a game out of letting his employees guess his accurate age), though quiet active in his older age, coming into the shop and working from dawn to dusk like clockwork. “I am locking up for the night. Are you sure you’ll be okay here? Do you need a ride anywhere? Food?” He asked, wiping away the grease from his hands. Over the past few years Han had become a sort of father figure for Rey, he and his pal Chewie becoming her unauthorized protectors.

In moments like these, where he’d check in on her, Rey wondered if Han had any children of his own, or even grandchildren. She heard once from Kaydel—the auto shop accountant and business manager—Han Solo had been married, for years before a mutual divorce for unclear reasons. Kaydel even knew the woman, Leia Organa, when she still lived in the area. The former Solo once handled the business side of the auto shop while she was a Sociology professor at the university. Leia had trained Kaydel before leaving, but that was the extent of the young woman’s knowledge.

Rey smiled at Han, shaking her head. “Nope, I’m good. I’ll make sure to set the alarm before I leave.”

“Alright,” Han sighed, not convinced, “If you do get hungry, I am pretty sure Chewie left one of his famous meatball subs in the fridge. The big fur-ball wouldn’t mind if you ate it.” It was true—Chewie made enough food to feed an entire army, or better yet, an entire classroom of starving college students. Randomly, Rey would find Tupperware of cookies, sandwiches, and casseroles tucked into her backpack, Chewie slipping the food in when he thought she wasn’t looking.

“Thanks, Han” Her boss waved her off, heading out the door with a ‘see ya’ over his shoulder.

Alone once more, Rey turned back to the screen, to an awaiting message from Knight_of_Ren.
Knight_of_Ren: You have to write about it.

Scavenger_Kenobi: No, it is personal.

Knight_of_Ren: How many times do I have to say this? THAT. IS. THE. POINT.

Rey scoffed; he was being ridiculous. She did not have to write about herself…she can maybe skirt around the subject of ‘me’. She did it for all of her other personal essays, it wasn’t that difficult.

Knight_of_Ren: Let me put it this way—someone out there needs to hear your story.

Scavenger_Kenobi: That is obnoxiously cliché.

Knight_of_Ren: Clichés hold more truth than lies—that’s why they are clichés. It is a source of undeniable truth because they are repeated subconsciously.

Scavenger_Kenobi: Wow, got philosophical fast right there.

Knight_of_Ren: I am being honest. There is some lonely kid who needs to hear your story.

Scavenger_Kenobi: How do you know I’m lonely?

Knight_of_Ren: Takes one to know one.

Rey bit her lip, not liking how sharp the message pinched her heart. She tried to snark him away, but he deflected. Expertly.

If she was going to do this, she needed to trust him.

Scavenger_Kenobi: I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.

Wide eyed, she reread her reply, realizing how sexual it sounded. Quickly, she typed out a follow up.

Scavenger_Kenobi: In other words, I’ll tell you my sob story if you tell me yours.

Knight_of_Ren: No.

She was officially getting tired of this back and forth—she needed help, and maybe messaging some random guy was not the best option. Or send him her worst piece of writing.

Annoyed, Rey roughly piled her hair on top of her head, tying it up with a scrunchie. What she did not understand was why this guy was so adamant. He wanted to help? Well he was not exactly the most polite or considerate person thus far—insulting her and her work, then demanding she write more.

What right did he have to demand her?

Scavenger_Kenobi: Then why the hell do you care?

Scavenger_Kenobi: What are you getting out of helping me? If it’s really so awful, and my piece is rubbish why don’t you just ditch me?

Knight_of_Ren: ‘Rubbish’—are you British?
Honestly, that’s all he got from her reply? Rey wiped her hand down her chin, refraining from shouting an explicative into the empty auto shop.

*Scavenger_Kenobi: Why are you still messaging me?*

The message stared back at him, Ben unable to bring the nerve to answer her question.

*Scavenger_Kenobi: Never mind. Don’t answer.*

This was stupid.

Panic surged through Ben—despite the poorly written and superficial subject matter, he wanted to know the person behind the piece because she shined through in her writing. She had potential, more potential than the ‘professionals’ he met on a daily basis. He couldn’t let her get away.

His thoughts flew faster than his fingers could type.

---

*Knight_of_Ren: My therapist told me to do this because honestly, I am miserable. I am a miserable guy who doesn’t know how to not be negative and takes it out on others. At least that is the butchered version of my therapist flowery description of my personality. As of right now, my best friends are my mother and my grad school buddy, because I don’t know how to interact with other people, because let’s face it, the world is filled with morons. And I have been burned by these morons over and over—which has also added to my status as a human being. Not to mention, I am stuck in a job I hate. A job I fought tooth and nail for where I now do not get my creative needs fulfilled, nor will I ever get a promotion or be recognized and treated right of the title I currently occupy. I needed an outlet, and helping others is apparently beneficial for both ends. Clearly I am wrong.*

Rey did not expect a brief, tell-all essay of the man’s shit life. From what she could read, he was cripplinglonely and had some issues…but didn’t they all? She certainly did. Ren told the truth in his ad—he really did work for a literary company of some sort, and it did not live up to sacrifices he gave.

Her laptop pinged.

*Knight_of_Ren: Is that enough of an exchange for you?*  

*Scavenger_Kenobi: Fine. I’ll write about myself.*

*But you will be my spring board! I need bounce ideas off of someone, and as of right now you are my only hope Ren.*

*Knight_of_Ren: Fine. I am alright with that, it’s what I am here for. Just use email this time. I am about to lose my goddamn mind with this insistent pinging.*
**Scavenger_Kenobi:** MY GOD, ME TOO. You’d think the website would have a better notification system, but no. Your email is the same on your profile right?

**Knight_of_Ren:** Yes. Yours too?

**Scavenger_Kenobi:** Yup.

*Just so you know, you are still an arsehole.*

**Knight_of_Ren:** ‘Arsehole’—British?

**Scavenger_Kenobi:** Fine, you prick.

**Scavenger_Kenobi:** Yes. I am British.

---

Ben leaned back against his sofa with a smirk, shaking his head.

**Knight_of_Ren:** Will do, Kenobi. Will do.

---

**Chapter End Notes**

I LOVED WRITING THEIR BANTER.

Slowly they will get to know each other better and share other forms of contact (texting, calling, snail mail) and we will one day, in the distant future, have a Skype call. One day my friends, as it is not a Reylo fic I have written if there isn't a Skype moment, haha!

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! I love discussing the fic with my readers :)

---
Chapter Summary

Through out the week, Kenobi and Ren correspond.

Chapter Notes

I know I need to be doing school work (there are only two and half weeks left in the semester for me) and continue writing the next chapter for 'Across Alternate Universes' but this would not leave me alone until I wrote it! Also, typos will be fixed through out the week.

SO, here's another update! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

knightofren@holo.com

RE: List of Topics for a Prick

Kenobi,

When I gave you my email, I thought you would have the common sense to use it judiciously.

So this is a warning: USE IT JUDICIOUSLY.

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: List of Topics for a Prick

Ren,

Sending you lists of things I remember about my life is using your email judiciously.

Just think, any normal college student would be spamming your inbox with memes or chain mail.

But not dear Kenobi; I have more dignity than that.

Kenobi

knightofren@holo.com

RE: List of Topics for a Prick
Kenobi,

Nobody forwards chain mail any more. Even I know that.

Ren

Skywalker squinted at the students, watching as they hastily wrote in their journals (“No computers; only pen and paper. Pen and paper will not fail you like technology.”). He gave them the oldest writing exercise in the book: tell me about your weekend.

“Alright, pens down,” A series of clatters were heard as students dropped their pens and chairs shuffling away from desks. Heads dropped down to avoid Dr. Skywalker’s gaze—all except Rey, who stared the man down, chin lifted high. Disappointingly, he looked over Rey’s shoulder, to the edgy girl behind her. “Sabine, you first.”

Rey then sat through all eleven of her peers overly censored recounts of their weekends. She tried her best not to fall asleep during Jacen’s less than riveting tale about his parakeet’s trip to the vet and to not cringe during Mara’s retelling of getting lost in the club scene three towns over. When Rose shared what she wrote, Rey tried her best to tune the woman out; she did not need to know the details of the Finn-Rose relationship. After corresponding with Ren, Rey slowly fell into the clutches of sleep on the break room sofa. She woke before Han came to open shop, around six in the morning. She had plans to wrap herself in her coziest pajamas and sleep for the next eternity, only to be welcomed home to a lovefest—the two were arguing over who would say goodbye first. It was nauseating.

“And Rey, you’re last so just give us a quick summary.” Skywalker demanded, Rey loudly clearing her throat as a subtle form of defiance.

“I made a new friend this weekend,” Rey announced to the bored looking class. No one was listening, like she expected. This is exactly why she did not want to go last. With a huff, Rey continued, “He is an editor for a literary journal; we bonded over literary devices.” Saying it out loud, Rey realized how lame her weekend sounded in context with everyone else’s—and she was one to judge. “But I think he might—”

“Oh would you look at the time.” Skywalker clapped his hands, effectively interrupting Rey. “Class is over. See you next class with your first rough draft of your memoir.” The professor charged out of the classroom before any of the students, leaving Rey sitting with her journal laid out before her opened to her quick write.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: List of Topics for a Prick

Kenobi,

I read your list.

Do you have anything else?
Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: List of Topics for a Prick

Ren,

‘ANYTHING ELSE’?

You seriously liked none of it.

Kenobi

knightofren@holo.com

RE: List of Topics for a Prick

Kenobi,

It’s not that I don’t like your ideas…but what do you really want to write about?

Narrow it down to one or two things, then we can talk.

Ren

“Here are submissions for next month’s issue,” Mitaka announced to Ben as the mousy man set the manuscript copies on the desk. “Sorry for the delay.”

Ben lifted his gaze to the assistant, peering at him over the rims of his glasses. “Why are they coming in late? I asked for these yesterday.” He knew his young assistant was absent minded; Ben received one too many meeting notes adorned with cat doodles, but the kid was not absentminded enough to miss a monthly deadline.

“Mr. Snoke wanted the Praetorian Circle to look over them before they came to you Mr. Ren.” Burning frustration and fury rose through Ben at Mitaka's information; of course, he’d been blindsided once again. Breathing in deeply, as Amilyn taught him, Ben dismissed his assistant.

knightofren@holo.com

Subject: People Are Assholes

Kenobi,

Never work for egotistical assholes.

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org
RE: People Are Assholes

Ren,

EKKKK.

Rough day I assume?

Kenobi

P.S. So the using email judiciously rule only applies to me? Because I am pretty sure you violated your own rule.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: People Are Assholes

Kenobi,

No. That email was me acting as a mentor.

As your mentor, I am warning you not to work for egotistical assholes.

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: People Are Assholes

Ren,

Who the hell decided you were my mentor?

I do not need a mentor. I need someone to read my essays, and then ridicule me about my lack of creativity—oh wait I don’t need that last bit, you just do it anyways.

Kenobi

P.S. I narrowed down my topics down to two.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: People Are Assholes

Kenobi,

I am deciding right now, I am your mentor. Because you sure as hell need one with the amount of mouth you have. Plus, having a mentor is not that bad; I had the same one for over five years.

Ren
P.S. If you narrowed down your topics, send them to me.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: People Are Assholes

Ren,

YOU HAD THE SAME MENTOR FOR FIVE YEARS?

Does that mean I’M stuck with YOU for five years? If so, we are going to lay down some ground rules buddy. Like, I don’t know, we are only permitted ten insults a day? I say ten because backhanded compliments are a thing, and I have a feeling that is your M.O.

Kenobi

P.S. My two topics are my name (very interesting story I assure you) and moving to the States (which is relatively boring, yet mildly intriguing). HELP ME.

P.S.S. What happened to your mentor, if I may ask? A falling out? Was it dramatic Devil Wears Prada type stuff? Or like humble, life learning Tuesdays with Morrie style?

knightofren@holo.com

RE: People Are Assholes

Kenobi,

I don’t think I can do ten insults a day. What if you really need to be knocked down a peg or two, and I already used five insults earlier in the day? Or if your manuscript is awful and you think it’s the best thing since sliced bread? With your stubborn streak, it’s going to at least take twenty insults to get you to listen to me.

Let’s do the opposite; let’s try to give each other ten compliments in a day.

Ren

P.S. Do the name one. You sound more interested in the topic. Which leads to another question that has been bothering me—is your last name really ‘Kenobi’, or are you a fan of the magical realism author Benjamin W. Kenobi?

P.S.S. My mentor died this past year. It was a mix of the two, though obviously more Tuesday’s With Morrie towards the end, even if I didn’t know it at the time.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: People Are Assholes

Ren,

Compliments? Ten compliments? I think this is you just trying to get me to be nice to you.

Not happening.
But I’ll compromise for at least five compliments. As in, you give me five compliments, and I don’t give you any. This, I think, is true balance my friend.

Kenobi

P.S. My real last name is Kenobi. Honest to god. But I am indeed a MASSIVE FAN of Benjamin W. Kenobi’s works. My username comes from his novella The Scavenger and the Lost Prince. I have probably the most thread bare, worn out copy on the planet but it is mine! And I love it with every fiber of my being.

Speaking of names—‘Knight of Ren’? I am going to take a leap of faith here and say it’s based off of the late and great Anakin Vader’s last publication, The Longing You Seek. Which I will admit, I sobbed reading. It’s absolutely one of the best pieces of literature I have ever read. I wanted to reach through the book and hug the Knight of Ren—he deserved to know his master was his grandfather.

P.S.S. I am sorry for your loss—I will admit I am shitty at this kind of thing. But he must have been a great man, since you are decent.

See what I did there? A compliment. :)

knightofren@holo.com

RE: People Are Assholes

Kenobi,

We’re friends now?

I don’t remember agreeing to that.

Ren

P.S. The Scavenger and The Lost Prince is Kenobi’s greatest work, hands down. I have my own worn copy tucked in on my bookshelf. And yes, ‘Knight of Ren’ is from Vader’s last novel.

P.S.S. Don’t be sorry. He was old and it was months ago. You never knew him.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: People Are Assholes

Ren,

Yes. You are my friend, whether you like it or not.

Just like I am your mentee, whether I like it or not.

Kenobi

P.S. I KNEW IT WAS A REFERNECE.

P.S.S. It doesn’t matter if I didn’t know him. I kind of know you and that is enough.
RE: Dog Pictures

Kenobi,

Why did you send me ten photos of the same scrappy dog?

Remember—

JUDICIOUSLY (adv.) with good judgment or sense.

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: Dog Pictures

Ren,

The dog is BB! He is the sweetest, and I thought you needed a pick me up.

Plus, it was either BB or Emmie, a very snooty tuxedo cat. I made an assumption you were a dog person.

Am I wrong?

Kenobi

RE: Memoir Rough Draft

Kenobi,

Let me get this straight—

You emancipated, changed you name, then applied to first college you found when searching for your major with a creative writing emphasis, got into said college with aplenty of scholarships, got
a visa, and moved to the U.S.

HOW THE HELL ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?

I don’t say this often…but I am impressed.

Ren

P.S. You need to cut your backstory in half—great read for me, but it felt like a detour on the ‘story of my name’ plot. Don’t try and combine your topics because your narrative voice falters when you go over the logistics of getting here.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: Memoir Rough Draft

Ren,

It is called hard work, dedication, and finally getting the money some distant relative left in my name.

And thank you; I’ll count that as a compliment.

Kenobi

P.S. Fine I’ll cut it :(

“Wow, I don’t think I have ever seen you type so fast.”

Rey stumbled at the new voice in the room, almost tripping over in the stool she sat on. The local coffee shop, The Castle, had mostly been empty at the late hour. Usually when Rey had important assignments and need space to work in relative silence the owner, Maz, allowed Rey to stay in the late hours if she promised to serve any late night coffee addicts. In the sleepy coastal town, few students clamored to the little coffee shop in the evening hours, preferring to drive to the city thirty minutes south.

Which meant Rey thought she’s be alone for the evening.

Looking up she, adjusted the thick rimmed glasses on her nose to see Poe Dameron standing before her.

“Hey…you!” Rey greeted awkwardly, shifting her laptop out of his view. Ren sent her comments on her first couple of paragraphs—

I think you should try a braided essay format—here is the link to an exceptional example.

For some reason, over the past few days, Rey became more protective over who read over her shoulder and caught a glance of her laptop screen. It wasn’t as though she were committing a crime corresponding with Ren, but she felt some people wouldn’t understand.

Especially jump-to-conclusions boy wonder, Poe Dameron.
“I figured I’d find you here,” Poe shrugged, something odd in his rogue charism. “You actually look like a writer with the glasses and papers around you.” He tilted his head to the side, “When did you even get glasses? Last time I checked, you didn’t need specs.”

Rey forced herself to smile brightly at her friend, trying to find a way to get around the small talk Poe was imposing upon her. “Uh, last November. I am farsighted, exceedingly so… optometrist thought it was a miracle I could function so long without them.”

“I knew one day you’d end up like all of us humans.” Poe joked; for as long as they knew each other Poe declared Rey was an anomaly to the human race because she was too kind (which was a total lie; Ren could probably write an annotated essay about her not too kind personality at this point), her flawless skin and eyesight (a misconception; she had horrible acne for most of her teenage years and still had painful breakouts, and her eyesight is botched), and her resilient attitude (Poe did not know how many times she cried over well—everything).

For some reason, Poe put her on a pedestal—Finn told her it’s because Poe had silently adopted her as the sister he always wanted, but it sort of became a problem when their other friends began to follow suit. She was treated as the baby in their friend group, despite her recently acknowledged overbearing nature to Finn. Which was true—she was the youngest; two years younger than Finn, three years younger than Jess, and a little over a decade with Poe. Somehow a young freshman girl gravitated towards the older students, who lived more life and decided to attend university later rather than sooner. She experience more than most of her generation, it made sense she’d become friends with the likes of Poe, Finn and Jess…yet she never accounted for being considered naïve or too impressionable in their eyes.

Rey would never admit it aloud, but she was a little glad her friends had drifted away from each other.

“Yup,” She nodded, biting her lips together. Rey’s hand itched to text Finn; to tell him the man who broke his heart was back in town. Though their conversation they had a few days back stopped her. Finn was a grown man who did not need her looking after him. Instead, she smiled at Poe, closing her laptop shut. “What brings you back? I thought you were an assistant for some humanitarian on the east coast?”

Poe nodded, his curly hair bouncing with every move. “I am, but she need me to come back to pick up some paperwork from her ex-husband. He keeps on forgetting to mail it; she got so frustrated, she sent me.” He coolly glanced around the coffee shop. “I thought since I was here, I could stop by and maybe see if Finn would like to talk.”

“Then why did you come to see me?” Rey asked, shoving her laptop into her messenger bag. It was already half past seven; she needed to close up shop, and effectively kick Dameron out of her way.

“Because you are his best friend,” Poe stated as though it were the most obvious reason; Rey felt her irritation spike at his thinking. He followed her as she poured the left over coffee into a thermos for later. Maz didn’t pay her to be there to close up, but she certainly did let Rey have access to any amount of coffee she desired. “If anyone could convince him to see me, it’s be you ReyRey.”

She tried not to roll her eyes at the childish nickname Poe and Jess bestowed upon her. Rey never liked it, no matter how hard she tried. It reminded her too much of the teasing the other kids in the foster homes would inflict towards her growing up.

She locked up the register and picked up messenger bag, heading to the front door of the coffee shop. “Well Poe, if you want to see him, go and see him. You don’t need me to do that.” She
flicked off the lights, ushering Poe out with the wave of her arm.

Confused, Poe took her direction. They stepped out into the chilly evening air, the streetlamps lighting the sidewalk. “But what if—”

Once she locked the door, Rey turned to Poe, staring him dead in the eye. “You don’t need me to talk to Finn. Hell, I haven’t even had a real conversation with Finn in days. And we live together.” She sighed, “Now if you’ll excuse me I have a paper to write.”

---

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Subject: I Hate It When You Are Right

Ren,

You’re right. The world is filled with morons.

Please tell me I am not one of them, because I might take detour on my way home and just jump into the ocean if I am.

Kenobi

P.S. This counts as one of my compliments.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Hate It When You Are Right

Kenobi,

You are annoying, not a moron. Learn the difference.

Don’t jump into the ocean, there’s gross seaweed.

Wait—Ocean? Do you live by the ocean?

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Hate It When You Are Right

Ren,

Your backhand compliments are so exquisite, I did not even realize I was being complimented until I reread your email!

And I am not telling you where I live!

But, I do live by a giant mass of water. It makes mornings hell.

Kenobi
Something Kenobi mentioned in one her emails was still bothering him a day later. What she wrote about the Vader piece had been twisting in his brain non-stop. She didn’t know Vader was his mentor—or that he had been a collaborator, to the point of being Vader’s ghostwriter, on the novel. He remembered the old man insisting on the name ‘Ren’ for the character, despite it being the last name of Ben’s pseudonym.

He found it odd, yet did not question it but…

If Vader knew he was dying…was he trying to tell Ben something? Many scholars claimed Vader pulled themes from his own life to inspire his writing, Ben able to concur after working close with the man. Lighter themes of romance and friendship were heavily present in his early work, when his wife was still alive. Vader’s writing took a sharp turn after her death, extremely dark in nature, and playing with themes of mortality. Ben clearly remembered reading Vader’s modern retelling of *Frankenstein* when he was fifteen; he’d been disturbed to the point he’d been haunted by nightmares.

The novel, *The Longing You Seek*, itself was desolate, set in some hybrid of medieval-space. The master slowly dying while the Knight of Ren was on a quest to find the last Warrior of the Temple. The original material was dense before Vader gave Ben the manuscript to flesh out and edit.

Ben could not help but wonder if something important about Vader’s life had been purposefully slipped into the novel.

“Ben, how’s the mentoring going?” Leia asked, taking a sip from her glass of water. Ben blinked at his mother, confused for a moment, before his brain caught up to his surroundings. It was Wednesday, Ben and his mother had met for their usually weekly dinners at Leia’s favorite restaurant. It was an arrangement his mother insisted on when they lived within the same proximity. Despite their family troubles, Ben loved his mother, and vice versa.

“Uh, good. Kenobi might have decent piece after all. She turns in her rough draft on Friday.” He answered.

“‘Kenobi’?” Leia asked with a chuckle, “That’s funny; you were named after a Kenobi.”

Ben squinted at his mother, forgetting his previous musings “Excuse me?”

---

knighthotren@holo.com

Subject: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Kenobi,

Some disturbing news.

My mother told me she and my father named me after Benjamin W. Kenobi—a family friend. Which, why did my mother never tell me she knew Kenobi?!
Writer Kenobi, not you Kenobi. But I feel like you knew that.

In some bizarre way, we share a name.

Extremely Disturbed,

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Ren,

Your real name is ‘Benjamin’?

Really?

I should not be surprised it was something mundane. Now that I think about it… you do sound like a Benjamin. Benji. Benny. Ben.

I think I like Ben.

Extremely Satisfied,

Kenobi

knightofren@holo.com

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

NO.NO.NO.

You cannot, repeat, cannot call me any of those names.

Only my mother calls me by my birth name. I work with a pseudonym.

And you, Miss I-Am-Going-To-Write–About-My-Name! For someone who is writing an essay about how she chose her name, you have not mentioned your first name once, ANYWHERE.

Extremely Annoyed,

Ren

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Ben,
I am going to now and forever refer to you as such. Get over it you pompous arse.

And I did put my name in there. My birth name is Rachel.

Extremely Bored with Pompous Arse Ben,

Kenobi

knightofren@holo.com

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

You and I both know you do not go by that name. You wrote it in your memoir.

You go by a nickname that you legally changed to your actual name.

So who are you really Kenobi, hmm?

Extremely Curious.

Ben

P.S. Look, I threw you a bone—I used my real name to sign-off.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Ben,

My name means ‘King’ in Spanish.

That’s all you’re getting.

Extremely Trolling,

Kenobi

knightofren@holo.com

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Rey.

Your first name is Rey.

Rey Kenobi. I think it’s fitting. I like it.

Ben

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: WE ARE NAMED AFTER THE SAME PERSON

Ben,
Rey pressed ‘send’, then closed her laptop shut with a smirk. Ben was a dork, no matter how professional he tried to make himself out to be.

Yawning, Rey checked the time on her cell phone; it was ten past two in the morning. She needed to go to sleep soon, she had a rough draft to present in her sad excuse of a workshop in the morning.

It wasn’t until she laid in bed, drifting in the abyss of slumber and wake, did Rey realize she never learned Ben’s last name.

Chapter End Notes

Rey and Ben are getting closer-- as in they now know each other as Rey and Ben, not their usernames! They also became fast friends, which I think is kind of fanon now since canoically Kylo and Rey have only known each other max two weeks and they were already at ride-or-die, lets rule the galaxy together status haha.
Also a lot of plot things are stirring around in there, hmm.
Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! :)
Rey's anger gets the best of her. Meanwhile, Ben decides to do some research.

Lots of info coming your way friends! These chapters keep on getting longer. This is probably one of the longest chapter I have ever written for any fic :) Also this one is kind of Rey centric, but not much.

Typos will be fixed through out the week.

You got this Rey.

Don’t throw up. Just breathe.

It’s a rough draft—not the end of the world.

You don’t know my class. They do not share anything constructive. If anything they are going to focus on a typo for the entirety of my allotted time.

Ben—once they ranted for TEN MINUTES about how I did not indent any of my paragraphs.
knightofren@holo.com

RE : Mentor Pep Talk

But…if you didn’t indent ANY of the paragraphs, the essay is structurally sound. It would only NOT be structurally sound if you were inconsistent.

But from what I can tell, you are consistent on structure.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: Mentor Pep Talk

I KNOW.

I FUCKING TOLD THEM THAT.

This is the type of bullshit I have to deal with.

knightofren@holo.com

RE : Mentor Pep Talk

And your professor never corrected them, or facilitated the workshop?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: Mentor Pep Talk

No, never interacts. Just sits on the corner and watches like a fucking nimrod.

I hate him.

This is not me being my wonderful sarcastic self—I legitimately despise the wanker.

knightofren@holo.com

RE : Mentor Pep Talk

Wow.

You despising someone. I’d like to say I am surprised…. But well I think you know my answer.

Then this is what you are going to do: Walk into class, head held high, and share your piece. Share it and if you are given the opportunity to take questions or speak—defend the shit out of it. Try to remember what you say because you probably DON’T have it in your essay but you can definitely incorporate it in the next draft. Keep yourself accountable and stay true to your word.

Then destroy everyone else’s pieces because I feel like you are probably as harsh as I am. Which I guess I should say be a little kind—but don’t sugarcoat things.

You don’t need to be liked, Rey.
Rey Keno-

Ben hit backspace again.

He’d debated internet searching Rey for the last half hour while he answered his emails and brewed his morning coffee. About a week into their new found companionship and Ben desperately wanted to know the girl behind the email. An undeniable need to put a face to a name was unquenchable. He’d never been great at making friends, or the best communicator. For most of his childhood he’d been the kid tucked into the corner reading a book—his looks, ears little too big and nose a little too long, not to mention his intelligence made it difficult for other kids to approach him. Once he hit adolescence, Ben convinced himself everyone else around him were the useless idiots; he tried to act as though being an outcast in the little coastal town of Ach-To did not bother him. When in reality, all he craved was a natural acceptance.

Rey, somehow, naturally accepted him. Ben’s harsh criticism and dry quips were met with her sarcasm, bluntness, and wit. She rose to be the challenge for him, to engage in friendly (and sometimes not-so friendly) battle of words.

He’s never experienced anything like it.

He completely backspaced her name. Ben respected Rey too much to jump three steps ahead and google search her, when she did not even know his own last name. The playing field wasn’t fair and he preferred an equal match.

Though Kenobi...

Benjamin W. Kenobi

With new found determination, Ben decided to search the other Kenobi. His namesake he never knew, but another legacy to bore. He wondered if Rey understood the weight she carried with her chosen name. Or if the frivolous matters of legacies and expectations exceeded her due to her own lack of familial presence.

“Miss Kenobi,” Dr. Skywalker spoke from his hermit corner, where he had been obnoxiously drinking his chocolate milk for the main duration of the workshop. “You’re next.”

“Hey Rey, I never got your email of the rough draft,” Jacen announced.

Turning to her classmate, Rey held her head high, just like Ben told her to, “I sent it to your school email. I sent it to everyone’s school email. Like it says to do on the syllabus.” She answered tersely. Not even a minutes into the workshop and they were already off on a rocky start.

“Oh, I don’t check my school email,” Jacen announced with a sloppy shrug. “You should have sent it to my personal.”

“I don’t have your personal email, Jacen. I sent you my last piece just fine.” Rey argued before swiftly turning back to her peers in the workshop circle. She caught Mara speedily trying to read the essay, chewing on the cap of her pen while Sabine doodled in her notebook—the girl didn’t even have a copy of the manuscript out either. A few of the other students in the circle either had a
pristinely white copy of her manuscript or their laptops open to the document. None of them had physical notes amongst their belongings. The only person who seemed prepared in any capacity to share was Rose, who smiled a little too brightly at Rey…which she only did if she had something awful to say.

“Do…do any of you have a have a marked manuscript?” Rey asked hesitantly, twisting her own copy in her hands.

“What?” Bobby, or “Boba” as his friends liked to call him, asked twiddling with his tablet. “A physical copy? Are we trying to kill more trees here Rey?”

Forcing a stained smile, Rey resisted the urge to face palm. This is the lot she had to contend with. “Of course not Boba, it’s not like it is normal protocol or anything to bring a thoroughly read and marked manuscript to a creative writing workshop.” She huffed, biting her the inside of her cheek.

Of fucking course; nobody actually gave a damn.

“You’re down to twelve minutes, Rey.” Skywalker announced lazily behind her. Three minutes had trickled down in her fifteen minutes time slot. She needed to get the ball rolling.

“Um, does anyone have any positives,” Sabie, the designated student facilitator for the workshop offered up meekly, hidden behind her curtain of curly hair. The girl rarely spoke in workshops, perpetually shy hidden by her hair and large clothes, but she was nice all the same.

Rose’s hand shot up, Sabie nodding for her to continue. “I thought it was cute. Books inspired you to pick your name.”

“How is that ‘cute’? Did you not read the part—”

“Rey, you know the rules. No talking during your workshop.” Skywalker chimed in for the second time. Why the hell was he holding her accountable when Jacen defended at every objection about his Parakeet piece? Or when Mara gave elaborate backstories when asked a question about a character?

“I thought it was just cute. But I think you can include more dialogue.” Rose criticized with bright smile never once faltering.

Rey flinched back as though she had been slapped. Dialogue? Seriously? “But it’s a reflection piece—plus the rule of thumb is to only use dialogue if it serves a purpo—”

“Rey, the workshop rules.” Dr. Skywalker stressed once again, Rey’s jaw locking at the interjection.

“Anybody else?” Sabie announced meekly.

Eleven pairs of eyes blinked blankly at Rey.

None of them has anything? Nothing? Honestly, this was more pathetic than Rey could ever imagine. Eyes vacant and dead from her work was a living nightmare. Nobody cared enough to give her writing the time of day… then why the hell were they there?

From an early age, Rey decided to be a writer—she did not know how to be anything else. Writing allowed her to escape. To be someone else other than the little girl who moved from house to house, unable to be with one family for more than a year. More than the little girl who believed her washout parents will return, or the teenager who desperately worked until she was weary to leave
in order to find her true home. As a writer, she’d be a creator, a giver. She’d share more than
herself, share an entire world.

A naïve part of her thought she’d find her belonging amongst other creatives, other writers.

Why the hell was she there?

“None of you actually read my piece.” Rey bluntly stated. The awkward silence and unsure looks
shared amongst her peers confirmed her dreaded statement.

Hesitantly, ill hope in her heart, Rey glanced to the corner of the room. Unsurprisingly, Dr.
Skywalker had not moved an inch, eyes focused intently on the wall in front of him.

A shuffle of papers from Bobby caused the eyes fixated on Rey to shift across the circle. He
clarified, “Uh, you didn’t indent—”

Okay. That was the last straw.

“Oh shut the fuck up Boba.” Rey declared, ignoring the innocent gasps of shock from Rose and
Sabie. “We’ve been over this—if it is consistent then it is structurally sound.” Rey gritted out.

“Well it’s not nice to look at.” Boba defended, earning murmurs of agreement from the circle.

Sadistically, Rey smiled, her manuscript gradually crumpled in her vise grip. “Well it’s not like you
double space, and anybody who has ever written a paper knows you add half an inch to your
margins. So I wouldn’t be talking shit Boba.”

“Rey,” Rose murmured in warning. The woman’s concerned brown eye rubbed Rey the wrong
way—they weren’t friends; Rose was just Finn’s sort-of-girlfriend. Rose nor Rey were close
enough to warrant a chiding from the other. “Tone it down.”

Did Rose honestly try too…? No. Rey did not like how two frustrating aspects of her life were
converging into one in this instant.

A guttural scoff fell from Rey’s lips. “You know what? Fuck this workshop.” She stood up, her
manuscript still clutched tightly, as though it were her life line to defeat the situation. To defeat the
terror of inadequacy threatening to build into a crescendo in her fragile yet withstanding heart. The
unimpressed and frightened expressions of her peer’s faces only encouraged Rey to cut deeper into
the workshop circle’s delicate-artist flesh. “You lot want to be the next David Foster Wallace, a
J.K. Rowling  or worse a Hemmingway when you can’t do jackshit!”

“Rey—”

“You are all fucking pretentious writing monsters who seek to validate only themselves, which is
irrevocable pathetic. I mean what decent right do you fuck—”

“That is enough!”

All the students shrank back at the sound of their professor’s interruption. At some point during
Rey’s rant Dr. Skywalker rose from his corner to stand stoically still right behind her chair. Eleven
eyes, of the peers she called monsters, fleetingly moaned in pity for Rey. The heat of the eyes
focused intently behind her burned her back, while the coolness of abandonment from her
classmates slapped Rey in the face. One by one, pairs of eyes flicked away from her to anywhere.
To the laces of their shoes, their cell phones, or the overdue paint job on the walls.
Rey was alone, and for once in her life, it might have been from her own doing.

Slowly she turned on her heel, chin held high to face Skywalker. His blue eyes were icier than the coldest winters, the grime twist of his mouth projected enough information for Rey to gather to one conclusion... she fucked the fickity fuck up.

---

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Subject: I Fucked Up

The subject line says it all.

Rey

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

What happened? What was wrong with your piece?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

Nothing.

Nothing was wrong except for the fact nobody read my essay. And the person who did read it is my best friend’s sort of girlfriend and she said it was ‘cute’, which is stupid. IT’S NOT A CUTE STORY. Then I don’t know, I got fed up with how everyone was acting and I sort of snapped.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

Rey—snapped how?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

Long story short: I cursed the living daylights out of my peers and I am effectively banned from future workshops.

Like the subject line says—I fucked up. Majorly.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

I don’t know what to say… because honestly, it is not my place to reprimand you, nor should I because I can’t say I am totally guilt free in the cursing out professors/classmates department. I’ve done it more times than I’d like to admit. Like to one professor too many times, but this is not about
me. This is about you and you are going to probably hate what I am going to suggest but…

Talk to your professor. I am going to take an educated guess here and say workshops are part of your grade. You can’t let this drop your grade in the class, or your GPA. Try to get unbanned from the workshops.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

No. I’m not going to grovel to hippy dippy, grumpy professor. He’s a dick and flat out told me, in front of the class, he never liked me. And found me too naïve in my writing endeavors.

He hates me Ben. Probably glad he doesn’t have to deal with me all the time anymore.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

I stand by what I suggested. You need to talk to your professor.

It sucks; I know, I’ve been there, but you need to do it.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

But, it's kind of—and I know this is ridiculous to get worked up over—embarrassing.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

Serious question; when did you realize you wanted to become a writer?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

O K… I don’t see how this has to do with ANYTHING but…

When I was ten, one of my favorite libraries had a creative writing workshop. It was designed to be a class for some of the older folks in the community to take for stimulus instead of shuffle board or knitting. The instructor was a woman who embodied the personification of a rebel. Dark hair, dark clothes, a row of ear piercings, and cool cursive-like tattoos lining her arms.

Definition of a badass.

Well, I guess (some of the details are blurry; it was almost thirteen years ago) she caught me over hearing one of her classes and invited me in. She allowed me to sit on her lessons until the workshop was over. She encouraged me be a ‘rebel’ through writing—to be myself. Then to see these people (of course they were the elderly and a few randomness, but people all the same)
willingly, bravely share their thoughts, and work together to make each other better… collaboration in work is simply beautiful. I just loved how welcoming and exciting it was for everyone to share their work. I’d never seen anything like it. I kind of decided in that moment I wanted to do that—be creative and write. I sort of wondered if sharing my writing would bring me a sense of belonging.

It sounds stupid now.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

It’s not stupid.

Being encouraged to write and seeing how others receive joy and purpose through it is not stupid. Or trying to find where you belong through writing is not stupid. You fell in love with writing and that’s profound, Rey.

You need to remember this when you talk to your professor. In fact, this should be your motivation.

Also, I’m kind of relieved you actually love what you are doing. I am quite acquainted with the opposite.

I will admit, I got into writing for all the wrong reasons. Mostly family legacy and all, which brings some arrogance and pigheadedness. My uncle is an author, extremely popular to the point it destroyed him as a person. And my mother was a prolific civil rights activist before becoming a professor, most her work satire. Apparently my grandfather was a writer as well though I know very little on the subject. Anyways, I thought I had to follow the family footsteps, it only led to more trouble and now I hardly write at all, even though I have been pressured in the past to back to it. I prefer editing; less baggage.

I’m curious though. What happened to the badass instructor?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

Last I heard she got married and moved to the states nearly a decade ago. We tried to keep in contact, but I was moved to another home the summer between my eleventh and twelfth birthday. I can’t even remember her maiden name, let alone her married one.

But of your uncle…I’m sorry. It sounds like you honestly care for him despite it all.

Now I am the curious one… you use to write? Do you have anything published? Or anything maybe I can read? I think it is only fair I get to see for myself how well my mentor actually excels in the craft.

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

ACrackedCrystal.pdf

IT’S AWFUL. IT’S GARBAGE. BANISH IT TO THE PITS OF HELL OR WHATEVER.
(Did you see what I did right there?)

(Also it’s not awful. I won a couple of awards for it and it is published annually in the Alderaan Post for Mental Health Awareness Month. Also don’t judge the pseudonym in this one. I was still trying to figure out what to call myself.)

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked UP

HA HA. You’re so funny. -__-

Just because you say not to judge, doesn’t mean I won’t. It’s a guarantee I will.

Will you ever learn Ben?

I’ll respond back my comments and thoughts in a mo’. Must read this garbage.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked UP

First of all—Benjamin S. Matthews is not as bad as I thought it would be. Totally thought you were going to give me a name out of some geeky sci-fi novel or something. Like Darth Starkiller. It just doesn’t sound like it’s your name. I’m not sure if that makes sense.

Second of all—OH MY GOD. Talk about an emotional rollercoaster. The whole, well, EVERYTHING. From the absent parenting, to the depression and expectations, then the car crash, and of course, the divorce.

Is this true? Did this really happen? I know it says nonfiction but you wrote under a different name…

knightofren@holo.com

RE: I Fucked Up

It’s real. I purposefully changed all the names because of the backlash my family may have received. For a while I only wrote non-fiction, mostly to get everything out, but once everything was out...well I needed to do something else. My mentor convinced me to be an editor rather than a proof reader and freelancer. It was a wise decision.

Which brings us full circle: MEET WITH YOUR PROFESSOR. Own up to your mistakes. Because Rey, hate to break it to you, but cursing out a professor is always a mistake, especially when your grade and experience in the class is on the line.

Seriously. Do it. Or I will ignore your emails. Even if they are dog pictures.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: I Fucked Up

Fine you prick.
“What’s got you so glum, kiddo?” Han asked as Rey zoned out, arms deep in an engine. “I’m pretty sure a routine checkup wouldn’t bring you down.” He grinned, hands placed on his hips, reminding Rey of a classic adventurer seeking the reason for her slightly sour mood.

The previous night she told Ben she’d meet with her professor, but had been avoiding it for most of the day. Several times her hands moved on their own accord to email Ben something funny or a little thought she had, only to save the email as a draft two sentences later when she remembered his threat. In so many words, Rey promised him she’d fix her situation. She didn’t realize how much she actually messaged Ben until she could not message him.

“Um, some school stuff. Profs being jerks and all.” She shrugged, removing her hands from inside the hood of the car. Reaching behind to her pocket, Rey pulled out a splotched, oil stained rang and wiped the lingering grease and oil away.

“Ah,” Han nodded sagely as he surveyed the vehicle. It was a rather slow afternoon, the auto shop gradually rolling into the dry season. For most of the spring and summer months the shop is busy with regulars and tourists, it isn’t until mid-September until end of February did they get a break. They would be lucky to get a dozen cars in on a good week. During this time of the year, Han grew antsy with the lack of jobs to get his hands dirty with, not to mention his own health problems. He often hovered over Rey’s work as though he lived vicariously through her. “I remember those.” Han remarked with a chuckle.

“Han, you went to college?” Rey asked relatively surprised; from what she knew, Han had always been more hands-on, trade work type of man than a scholar.

“Oh no,” Han chuckled, “My son, he’d always pick fights with his professors. He actually did the writing thing for a while too. He works for some literary journal now.”

Rey blinked back, trying to compute the information Han had casually thrown to her; this was the first time, after working in the shop for over three years, Rey had ever heard the mention of a son. “I didn’t know you had a son.”

As though a somber cloud hung above Han Solo, his jovial comradery with her subdued, shadowed with regret. He cleared his throat. “Yeah I guess I don’t bring him up a whole lot since we uh, lost contact.”

“Oh,” Rey murmured, unsure of how to address the situation or if she were to offer some type of condolences. Her social awkwardness had never been an issue growing up, most adults and contemporaries waving it off as a symptom of shyness; it wasn’t until she went to college, and genuinely lived on her own did Rey realize the true level of her socially inept status. Her filter was all over the place and Rey did not find friendly affection pleasant. Once Finn tried to hold her hand, to cross the street of all reasons, and she flew into fight mood at the physical contact. In autopilot panic, she twisted his wrist against its natural angle, forcing him to let go her hand at the pinching pain.

“He… he had some issues, and it really took a toll on him. Honestly, it’s for the best we don’t keep in touch. He seems to be doing better without some of us in his life.” Han smiled tightly, the tender care for his son aching in his eyes.
Subject: Something is Bothering Me

Have you ever hated someone you never met because of something they did to someone else you love and care for?

I know you will probably ignore this…but I need to talk to someone about the conversation I had with my boss.

For the longest time I thought the man was some divorcee in his seventies, who had a weird friends and maybe liked poker nights a little too much. He never once mentioned any other family except for his ex-wife—who he still calls on the regular. Then out of the blue he mentions he has a son! A son!

I have worked in this auto shop for THREE YEARS and I never knew!

Then on top of it all, his only son has not been in contact with him for almost a decade! As someone, who never had a family to begin with, I find it unfathomable. Especially when my boss is such a kind man despite his roughness. He’s like a father to me.

I’m sorry, you probably don’t want to hear this.

RE: Something is Bothering Me

Yes, I have hated someone based things I have heard. I think it is the natural human reaction in us whenever someone we care about is attacked in some form whether it be by actions or lack of actions. I can agree with that…but the whole family thing? Well—I don’t talk to my family, save for my mother. And I did it because…well because it was what was best for me at the time.

Rey, sometimes biological family isn’t needed.

RE: Something is Bothering Me

SHIIIIITTTTTT.

Bugger, sorry. I’m an idiot.

Of course you don’t talk to your family—I should know this, I read your entire essay! But it makes sense why you don’t!

I guess I am just kind of grieving for my boss’ loss of a relationship. He looked distraught about the entire situation… and his health is not the best. He had a mild heart attack last December—his ex-wife apparently came back to check up on him. I wasn’t around at the time, I had to visit the family property in the UK—one of the regulations of my inheritance *rolls eyes*. A cousin (who I have never met, and who apparently doesn’t want to get in contact with me, cue another eye roll) and I take turns every winter holiday to visit the family home. It is sad and lonely and
freezing and I am forced to go back to countryside, which I hate, every other New Years.

But back to my boss—I hate to say it, but his health definitely took a nose dive after the heart attack. I just don’t want anything worse to happen and his only child is still estranged from him.

The email glowed back at Ben, his cursor over his blank reply box.

The mystery of Rey Kenobi further puzzled him.

A British girl who grew up in the UK, shipped from foster home to foster home, somehow found a distant relative. A relative she knew nothing about, which led her to her emancipation and to the United States. Now she lived on the west coast—that much he garnered from her emails—near the ocean. She worked in an auto shop, and was in a creative writing class of some sort. Her boss had an estranged son and an ex-wife. An estranged son he had not spoken to for nearly a decade.

A fleeting part—a ridiculous part—of Ben could not shake how…peculiar and familiar Rey’s situation sounded. Specifically the ocean, auto shop, and boss bit…

It would be absurd if…no. Just no. There was no way.

With over seven billion people in the world—there was no way.

It would be ridiculous. Extremely ridiculous…yet his fingers itched to look her up.

Throwing caution out the window, Ben googled Rey.

And came up with only a sparsely used Instagram account.

Her last post was on May seventh. It was a black and white filtered picture with her back turned to the camera, and a wine glass held lofty in her hand. The caption read: Can finally drink again! #twentyone

The rest of the photos were mostly of the ocean, the dog—BB, his memory supplied— and the tuxedo cat, or grey overcast clouds—each with some poetic caption. Usually, Ben would find the entire aesthetic of captioning picturesque photos with quotes to be of the hipster quality… he did not find it to be as bothersome with Rey. None of the quotes were inspirational in anyway. In fact the quotes were melancholy;

“I am too much alone in this world, yet not alone enough.” – Rainer Maria Rilke

Her profile presented nothing else. Only twenty pictures, all sporadic in posts from the last four years. Not an ounce of information in her bio, except for her name and birthday. Not even a location or university listed.

Somehow the discovery brought Ben more anxiety than relief.
REY YOU MESSED UP GIRL!
WHO WAS THE INSTRUCTOR FOR THE WORKSHOP REY MENTIONS (it is a character from the SW universe ;) )? WHO IS REY'S RELATIVE (also someone from the SW universe!)? Ben what did you find out from your Benjamin W. Kenobi search!?! Han! Poor Han! And Luke! WHAT WAS BEN'S ESSAY ABOUT? Soo many questions that will be answered in due time :) But you all can take a gander and guess! Kudos to those who do :)

Also, I just want to say I LOVE Rose, and she is not awful in this. We are currently in Rey's POV when ever we see her...things will get better in that relationship! Don't worry!

Also, the indention thing Ben and Rey message about is based off my own experience in a workshop. Not kidding, people complained about it (even though it is an aesthetic thing and is only a technical problem if it is not consistent).

Please let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! And I love discussing the fic with my readers! And thank you to everyone for reading and the wonderful comments! You are all so encouraging and kind, I definitely feel the love! :)}
Sometimes We Must Let Go of Our Pride and Do What is Asked of Us

Chapter Summary

Rey finally speaks to Skywalker, and Ben strikes a deal with Amilyn.

Chapter Notes

Many things happen ;)
Enjoy my lovelies!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org
Subject: Look I Who I Finally Adopted!
I just signed the paperwork and I am now the proud owner of BB! He says ‘hi’!

BBpic8.jpg

knightofren@holo.com
RE: Look I Who I Finally Adopted!
Exciting… did you talk to your professor?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org
RE: Look I Who I Finally Adopted!
No.

knightofren@holo.com
RE: Look I Who I Finally Adopted!
Then this conversation is over.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org
RE: Look I Who I Finally Adopted!
Damn it Ben!
**I’ve decided I am going to move because if I walk in on my roommate and his girlfriend again, I might die from embarrassment! Honestly, how hard is it to make it to the bedroom?**

---

**knightofren@holo.com**

**Re: A Rant**

When I was in my early twenties, I had a similar problem—only they were both somewhat my friends, and they had this weird fuck-buddy situation. Let’s just say I could not eat in the kitchen for almost a month after one walk in. Eventually I did move out, but only after I finished grad school. They did date for about a month before they officially ended everything.

It’s only awkward now because we all work for the same journal. Actually, it’s just weird working with people who knew you in your younger, more miserable years.

I want to say it gets better but…find a location all your own and somewhere you can crash when you can’t handle it. Maybe convince them to at least put a sock on the door as a warning—wait do people still do that? Or is there an app for it now? I know there is emoji meanings but I am still confused how it all works. I am definitely putting an age on myself.

Anyways, If it wasn’t for my friend Cassian (he lived about a block away and let me hang out until it was all clear) I’d probably be forever scarred and need to move to Antarctica or worse, back to my hometown to avoid ever seeing or interacting with the likes of Gwen and Armie.

ALSO—DID YOU SPEAK WITH YOUR PROFESSOR?

---

**scavengerkenobi@outpost.org**

**RE: A Rant**

Do you want the honest answer or the answer you want to hear?

**P.S.—how old are you? You can’t be more than, what, thirty-five? And that is not old.**

---

**knightofren@holo.com**

**Re: A Rant**

End of conversation.

**P.S. I’ll be thirty-two in November. Thank you for letting me know I am not old. Warms my sixty year old man soul.**
RE: A Rant

BEN! No, please come baaaaaccckkk.

P.S. No way do you have a sixty year old man soul—I’d say it fluxes between forty-seven and a ten year old kid.

P.S.S. I am twenty-one and I don’t even know what the emoji’s mean.

knightofren@holo.com

Re: A Rant

Who is this ‘Ben’?

I am Mentor Ben right now, and Mentor Ben doesn’t want Student Rey to screw up. Mentor Ben only talks to Student Rey when she actually takes his advice.

GO TALK TO YOUR PROFESSOR.

P.S. I’s say you are kind of the same way too—maybe along the lines of an old soul trapped in a younger body… but then you also send me a dozen dog pictures in a day, so maybe you really are a child at heart.

P.S.S. Glad to know there is still hope for your generation.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Subject: I’m Curious…

I think it is fairly obvious I am a college student, who works part time. And believe it or not you know more about me than the average acquaintance …yet I realized don’t know which literary journal you work for.

knightofren@holo.com

Re: I’m Curious…

You don’t want to know. It’s god awful. And it wasn’t in the beginning, or even a year ago. It just has been pretty bad since the change in editor-in-chief.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Re: I’m Curious…

Well, I don’t care if it is awful. I would already know how you feel about the journal and you’re job going in—I just want to know because you’re my mentor, and ya know…my friend.

knightofren@holo.com

Re: I’m Curious…
I work for First Order Literary Journal.

But let’s see if you can actually figure out my pseudonym. There are four main editors. Good luck.

And…HAVE YOU TALKED TO YOUR PROFESSOR?

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Re: I’m Curious…

Ya, know… emailing you builds my confidence. And I think I can…

Fine. Screw you.

I’ll try to talk to my prof, because I am really tired of our conversations ending like this, with you essentially yelling at me in all caps. I’ll get my shit together.

Five days after her rant from hell, Rey stood in front of Dr. Skywalker’s office door.

She’d been standing there for the last twenty minutes, trying to strike up the nerve to knock. Several scenarios of what would transpire circulated in Rey’s mind. Maybe he’d give her one look and close the door, or tell her she wasn’t adequate and to leave all together. There was the possibility he would not be in his office, as the man never had consultation hours posted, nor did he make the effort make his presence known at the university.

Or…or he’d been in his office, let her speak and maybe, just maybe, let her back into the workshop. For some reason, the last possibility was the most terrifying.

The sound of determined strides down the hall woke Rey from her musings. Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Skywalker trotting down the hall in an off-beat rhythm. His head was turned down, gaze intensely focused on the linoleum floor rather than the familiar path before him.

She…she couldn’t do this—the closer he came, the more wired panic coiled in Rey’s chest. Quickly, she scuttled away from the door and into the nearest restroom. Once in she, stumbled into a stall, slamming the rickety metal door behind her.

She tried to slow her breathing, but the more she attempted to be calm the less she became; a cruel oxymoron. How is it she was able to curse her classmates to their faces, Skywalker listening the entire time, with all the bravado of performer? How did she gain such confidence? Those stories of adrenaline rushes must be true, because hardly remembered what she said, but the faces of her peers and Skywalker’s reprimanding will be forever ingrained in her young mind.

She screwed up, and fixing it is a whole other beast she didn’t understand.

Shakily, she pulled out her phone. She needed to talk to Ben. Sure, he’d been pushing her to talk to Skywalker, rightly so, but Rey didn’t think she’d react this way. Not at all. She felt stupid—she’d been through worse, yet speaking to some hippie dippy man who also happened to be one of her favorite authors, seemed to be the end of existence for her.

She quickly sent an email to Ben—praying he’d email her back, and she hopefully, didn’t sound
“We believe with this new direction we will be able to appeal to a wider audience…”

Tiredly, Ben blinked at the projection screen; this might have been the longest presentation he had ever sat through, and he sat through more than a few intense lectures throughout his college career. Some marketing official Snoke hired less than a week ago was giving a presentation on the new logo and layout for the journal, as well as the website. Most of it was excessive… all shiny and glossy, and not to mention a gaudy gold as the ‘accent’ color.

Hux had already dozed off twice, Ben kicking him under the conference table to wake him up. If Hux found this boring and unnecessary then it must be true, as the man was all for progress.

A buzz from Ben’s phone was a god send, as the presenter moved to the fifteenth slide of thirty.

Turning it over, Ben saw the email notification.

It was Rey, again—probably trying to get out of speaking to her professor. He didn’t want to ignore the email; he liked corresponding with Rey. His chest constricted a bit every time he saw the little blip notification on his cell phone, and it hurt when he ignored her messages… yet he had to be firm. He could not let her jeopardize her grade or experience because of a silly thing called pride. She had too much potential to be wasted, even if her professor is a jerk and her classmates do not appreciate her abilities.

Regretfully, he place his phone back down on the table. He’d email her after the dreaded presentation.

Half a second later his cell phone buzz not once, not twice, but three times is succession.

Ok, that was weird. He picked his phone back up again to see three more email notifications. Cautiously, he tapped the screen, finally seeing the subject line—

*EMERGENCY, PLEASE EMAIL ME BACK*

“Mr. Ren, if you would be so kind as to silence your cell phone for the remainder of the presentation.” Mr. Snoke announced from the head of the conference table. Ben glanced up to see the bored and annoyed faces of his co-workers—he’s deal with the consequences later.

“Actually, a family emergency just occurred.” Ben stood up, picking up his notepad and pen, Mitaka looking up at him like a lost puppy. He’d be leaving his poor assistant to the wolves, but he didn’t really have an option. “I will need to step out, if you need anything my assistant will be here taking notes.”

He made a hasty exit, typing out a response to Rey as he made his way back to his office.

*knightofren@holo.com*

*RE: EMERGENCY PLEASE EMAIL ME BACK*

*Here’s my phone number, call me...*
Rey’s eyes bulged at the email. He…he sent her his phone number? She just wanted an email…this was…he trusted her enough with his personal cell phone number?

She then realized she had been staring at the email for a solid three minutes while Ben was probably waiting anxiously for her to call. Quickly, she copied and pasted the cell phone number and called, the nerves coiled in her chest dropping to her gut with a flimsy tumble. She was *calling* Ben, she was going to actually *hear* Ben talk—hear the sound of his voice. For some reason calling Ben felt like a foreign level of friendship for Rey, yet she could not place why. She had plenty of phone calls with her friends…but this was different. Ben was smarter, older, and just…Ben. A renaissance type man.

Rey didn’t know how to talk to Ben. She gulped when the called was picked up halfway through the first dial tone.

“Hello? Rey?” A smooth, deep baritone voice asked over the phone. “Rey, this is Ben. You need to tell me if you okay, because you can’t just send someone an email claiming it is an emergency without them becoming the slightest bit concerned.”

Goddamn it. Rey wanted to hang up her phone and throw it into the toilet, anything to end her embarrassment. Of course Ben had a sexy, deep voice. And the first thing he did was reprimand her. Could she be any more of a fool?

“Fucking shit, I’m sorry, but I’m freaking out here.”

Ben knew she was British, but to actually hear her voice over the phone…was jarring. But not in a bad way—he simply never connected the accent to the voice he heard in his head, the one he designated as the ‘Rey’ voice whenever he read her emails.

As Rey struggled to piece together what exactly happened through her panicked haze, he decided he’d like to listen to her talk all day even if it was gibberish. The fresh tone and genuineness in her voice was comforting—like speaking to a long forgotten friend. As unfortunate the timing was, Ben wanted to listen to Rey all the time; but he really needed her to calm down and relax—he barely understood a word Rey said when she became a sputtering mess.

“Rey, take a deep breath.” Ben listened to her follow his instructions waiting until she let out a breath. “Ok, good.” He gulped; he did not plan this far. Hell, he did not know what even went through his brain when he sent her his cell phone number. All he knew was she need his help and the best he could do at that moment was be a phone call away. “Now please, tell me slowly what’s going on.”

He heard a little echo of a huff from her, “Ben, I can’t do this. I already made an idiot of myself in class—and all I can see in my head is the look of utter disinterest from my classmates during the workshop.” Ben winced as she hiccupped on the other side. “I had been standing in front of my prof’s office for the last half hour, trying to suck up the nerve to do it, but I chickened out the moment I caught sight of him.”

He did not need to see her to know she was on the verge of tears. The crack and wheeze of her voice caused a twist in his ribcage.

“Stop it.” He told her, surprised by his own firmness. “Stop thinking you can’t do this because I know you can. Just through our emails I know you can.” Ben took a deep breath, annoyed with how
clichéd he sounded, but knew his words were the truth. “The worst he can do is say ‘no’.”

In her emails, Rey had moments of self-deprecation and so did he—but to hear those negative words come from the woman herself, to put a voice to the words…Ben did not think of how it would affect him. Rey was clever and funny, yet it was undeniable to acknowledge the young woman had her own ghosts of the past. Her ghosts floated off the pages of her work and tried to tangle into her daily life. Ben felt an echo of himself in Rey’s words—too scared to ask, to speak up, because she regretted her actions. He couldn’t let her walk to same path.

“Right…” She mumbled, a creaking sound overlapping her words. “You are completely right,” Gradually her voice grew in confidence as she spoke, her tone fading into the wit Ben battled with glee on a daily basis. “The worst he can do is say ‘no’.” Rey repeated back to him. “Thank you.”

“Uh…no problem.” Ben felt his face heat up at her gratefulness. Awkwardly, cleared his throat, hoping to fill his lack words with noise. “Just…uh. Just because you now have this number it doesn’t mean you can call me or text me whenever you feel like it.” And of course he had to revert back to Mentor Ben because Mentor Ben felt more comfortable than…Friend Ben.

Friend Ben for some reason blushed and quipped when he spoke to Rey. And complimented her.

A jovial, full hearted laugh rang through the phone. “Sure, Ben. I’ll use it as you say ’judiciously’.”

A released a breathy laugh, mentally chiding himself over how pathetic he sounded. He cleared his throat again, his voice returning back to normal. “Now, stop crying, clean up your pretty face, and go get into that workshop.”

“How do you know I have a pretty face?” She chuckled, Ben’s heart picking up speed at the question.

“I—I just do.” He replied softer than intended, Rey going quiet.

“Oh,” She exhaled, “Well that is uh, very kind. I’ll do as you say.” She spoke rapidly, stumbling over her words. “I’ll let you get back to work, bye!” She quickly hung up, leaving Ben standing in the middle of his office with his phone pressed tightly to his ear.

He didn’t even get a chance to say ‘bye’.

Not that he’d ever want to.

With a deep breath, still flustered from her conversation with Ben, Rey knocked on Skywalker’s office door.

Though her conversation with Ben had been brief, it was enough to bring her back to reality. She could do this, she had been through worse. Skywalker was just a man and the worst he could do was say ‘no’—and if he said ‘no,’ Rey would not be completely screwed over. She still had Ben as her mentor.

The door swung open.

“Ah, Miss Kenobi,” Dr. Skywalker greeted. “I had a feeling I’d see you soon after your little tantrum.”
Rey bit back a remark; she couldn’t let her emotions get the best of her. Skywalker was simply trying to get a rise out of her. “I’d like to discuss what I can do to get back into the workshops.” She told him, a voice in her head sounding distinctly like Ben’s reminding her to hold her head high.

She expected him to let her into the office, instead Skywalker leaned against the doorframe. Apparently, they were going to have the conversation out in the open.

“You want to get back into my workshop?” Skywalker questioned, eyebrows jumping to his hairline. “The very same workshop you degraded?”

Resisting the urge to shift her feet, Rey kept her stance firm. “Yes. The workshops are fifty percent of my grade. I need to go to them or else I’ll fail the seminar.” Eyelevel, she tried her best to convey her confidence and determination, though he seldom paid attention to her. Instead, his gaze remained on the scuffed linoleum floor the innocent hallway.

Skywalker hummed in thought, arms crossed. “Well, Miss Kenobi I can’t let you back into the workshop after that little stunt you pulled. I have had my own fair share of student’s emotional outbursts.” A dark shadow feel over the man’s features. “All of which ended the same way—more verbal abuse and a broken window.”

Everyone at Ach-To University knew about the broken window incident. Skywalker had a student who was prone to emotional outbursts, legendary outbursts where chairs would get flung across the room and books shredded by his bare hands. He never hit an actual person, but he scared his classmates enough and verbally tore his peers apart until they dropped out or changed their major. Something drastic happened during a workshop and the guy rammed a chair into the window, affectively breaking it from the force of his adrenaline.

That was a little over ten years ago.

Rey sighed; it would be a previous student who’d ruin her chances of ever getting back into workshop. She need to find a solution—fast. “Dr. Skywalker, I understand your hesitance, but what I did was a onetime offense—”

“Just because you say it is a onetime offense doesn’t mean it will be.” He said solemnly, shaking his head slowly. “I’m sorry Miss Kenobi, but I am a man who has been burned one too many times to make the same mistakes twice.”

“But I need to finish this seminar. It is too late to drop the class without it being a withdraw, and my bank account can’t handle that.” With scholarships and her inheritance, Rey barely had enough to cover her higher education if she remained on her four year plan. Staying another year to reapply for the course or shuffling around her classes to finish her degree were not an option.

Skywalker pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’m going to regret this.” He groaned before making spot on eye contact with her, the sharpness of his blue eyes alarming. “You will not be allowed into the workshop,” Rey deflated at his words, the old man really was saying ‘no’. “But, I will allow you to meet me one-on-one for a… trial run.”

Rey titled her head, attempting to understand what Skywalker was offering her. “A trial run? You mean…”

“I mean, we will meet once a week for the next three weeks to over your work. If you maintain professionalism and are civil, you can come back to the workshop.”
“Oh god,” Rey breathed, her heart returning tons a steady beat, “Thank you. Thank you so much—”

“Don’t make me regret this, Rey.” Skywalker warned with a grumble, though his demeanor did not deter her blinding smile. For once, her professor did not spat her surname, but called her by her first name. It was progress. He left the door open as he turned back into his office, Rey following half a step behind. The office was smaller than she expected, a practical box office with a desk and bookshelves consuming the entirety of the wall space. The dark green walls were only visible through the holes in his bookshelves that lined the walls from floor to ceiling. “We’ll meet on Wednesday’s at 3pm.” Skywalker announced as he shuffled through his enormous stacks of papers and books. He pulled out a blue folder from the bottom of a stack of older and newer copies of First Order Literary Journals. She never pegged Skywalker to be a fan of dark nonfiction and satirical articles—he seemed more into family dramas and reflective nonfiction. “Here is your manuscript for last class.” He handed her the marked copy, Rey concealing her surprise. She didn’t expect Skywalker to actually read her rough draft. He never did in the past. “It’s not half bad…the style reminds me of a former student of mine.”

“Oh,” Rey tucked her manuscript under her arm.

“He had a flare for dramatics in his writing,” Skywalker explained, his lips quirking at the memory, “and for some reason loved to write in the braided format. I am pretty sure every single essay he has written has been braided, even his published work.”

A silence fell over Skywalker; he swallowed hard, blinking several times.

“What…what happened to him?” Rey asked quietly; she’d never seen Skywalker get emotional. She knew emotion was there, a stack of his collection on her bookshelf back in her apartment as evidence. He wrote lyrically of emotions, forcing his readers to feel what he felt with every word. She felt like she was there when his nephew left his family behind. In an instant Rey was reminded her professor, who she looked up to was a simple man with his own problems to decipher.

“Ah, he lives his own life now,” Skywalker shrugged, the emotion gone as he shoved the First Order Literary Journals to the far corner of his desk. “But Wednesday, don’t be late.”

Rey nodded, finding Skywalker to not be as much of a pretentious dick as she initially thought.

“So I just told her to do it. Sort of commanded her because I… I am not good with women crying. I have no idea what to do when mother tears up a little bit.” Ben shrugged gazing intensely at the stack of icing drizzled chocolate scones. The general rule was he needed to share for at least forty-five minutes before he got any of the pastries Amilyn had set out. His godmother was an excellent baker, and knew the only way to coarser Ben into speaking would be through pastries. He’d always had a sweet tooth.

Amilyn hummed, her head tilted in a slight nod. “So you don’t like it when women you care about cry.”

“‘Care about’? I hardly know Rey.” Ben denied; he had only been communicating with Rey for two weeks. He watched as Amilyn nodded slowly, a sly grin playing on her lips. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

She clicked her pen closed, then laid it and legal pad aside. “Like what Ben?” Amilyn asked
casually, trying to hide the fact she knew exactly what Ben referred to, the smile on her lips disrupting her poker face.

He leaned forward, eyeing Amilyn steadily. “Like you know something I don’t.” Ben raised his eyebrows at her, an unamused smile on his lips. One of the downfalls of Amilyn as his counselor was that fact she knew him too well and knew his family’s patterns too well. The tall, graceful dreamer had been there for the majority of his childhood, she only living only a few hours away from Ach-To before moving around for a few years, until she ended in New York. Which had been perfect timing, as Leia moved to the east coast not long after.

Amilyn shook her head, picking up a blueberry scone. “Ben, sometimes you are your father’s son.” Ben’s eyes hardened at the comparison. Noticing defiance rising in Ben, she switched back to their previous subject. “Now this girl…”

“Rey.” Ben supplied, piling two scones on his tea plate. It wasn’t forty-five minutes yet, but Amilyn already disturbed the arranged plates, leaving an unannounced invitation for Ben to take his share.

“Rey,” She parroted back in acknowledgment, “you know her well enough to make a judgement and are willing to give her your phone number…” Ben squirmed—he was a private person. He had maximum, twenty to thirty phone numbers on his cell phone, half of which were take-out numbers. He did not freely give out his number to any old shlum. “Not to mention left an important work meeting to help her.”

“It wasn’t that important.” Ben interjected, his ears pinking as Amilyn carried on.

“I think it is suffice to say you care about her.” She concluded with a soft, excited smile. Ben frowned, Amilyn’s joy diminished in the slightest. “Don’t make that face Benjamin. There is nothing wrong with caring about someone outside of your mother and I.”

“But you’re making it sound like more than caring…” Ben stressed, “It’s not more than caring.”

Amilyn began pouring their tea, her smile growing wider the longer she talked. “Ben, having a crush is perfectly normal—”

“A ‘crush’? What am I? Twelve?” A bark a laugher escaped Ben, though it did not ease the tremble in his voice. “I do not have a crush on…” He trailed off, gesturing vaguely in the air.

“Rey.” Amilyn finished, dropping lumps of sugar into his tea cup. “You have crush on Rey. And it is a good thing.” She handed him his tea, Ben taking it from with a mild glare.

“How is having a crush on someone a good thing? Having a crush leads to feelings, feelings leads to dating and a relationship which leads to getting married, then ultimately divorce and heartbreak.” Ben reasoned in one breath. Bothered by the conversation, he took two big gulps of his tea, ignoring how the liquid burned his tounge and throat on its way down.

“Not every relationship is like your parents, Ben. Do we need to hash that out again?” They spent weeks upon weeks discussing his parent’s relationship. Ben always sure he was fine, up until something about his parents relationship popped up again and he went right back down into the spiral. Like whenever his mother announced she was visiting Ach-To or got a call from his father. Despite being divorced, Han and Leia were still sickeningly in love, choosing to be apart than together.

Ben would probably raise hell from down under if his parents ever officially got back together.
“No…I just…” He shook his head. He didn’t have a definitive answer for his anger at the thought of possibly having a crush on Rey.

Gently, Amilyn reached over the little coffee table to hold Ben’s hand. “Ben, just because people love each other doesn’t mean they belong together. Many different things come to play… like personalities, living situations, trauma, age differences…” She trailed off a little darkly, Ben frowning at the sudden change of tone. Quickly she let go of his hand, busying herself with making her own cup of tea.

“Age differences?” Ben squinted at his godmother. “I never told you how old Rey is; how do you know we have an age difference?”

Her eyes widen the information, “Oh, I wasn’t…” Amilyn shook her head, her lavender curls bouncing around her eyes. “I wasn’t talking about you—I was just listing things Ben. Examples—”

Usually composed and softly smiling, Amilyn became her own foil. Stuttering, shrugging, and trying her best to change the subject as fast as she could… “Auntie Amylin do you have a crush? Are you seeing someone?”

Her lips snapped shut, eyebrows scrunching. “Ben this is about you. Not about—”

“Oh my god, you do!” Ben exclaimed, a grin blooming. “You’re dating someone.”

“Ben…” She huffed setting her tea down, “Fine. Yes. I am seeing someone….but no one knows. We’re taking it slow because we are in very different positions in life.”

“How much younger?” Ben asked, knowing his godmother’s reference to age had nothing to do with him, but everything to do with her own insecurities.

Amilyn smiled tightly, “It’s a twenty-two year age difference. He’s twenty-eight.” She shrugged lightly, picking up her tea cup once more. “He got out a serious relationship about a year ago… He actually was planning on talking to his ex to get some closure between the two. But things didn’t go well.” She sighed sadly, “He’s kind of been antagonized by some of his friends. They took the ex’s side in the breakup.”

“That’s rough…” Ben commented offhandedly, more aware of how relaxed she became when she spoke about her new beau. Without a doubt, Amilyn deserved to happy. She’d always put her career first, along with friends and family. Rarely, did the compassionate woman care for herself and her own needs.

Ben decided to help.

“How about…” He began, “you make things public with your guy, and I’ll admit I might have a crush on Rey—and I won’t sabotage myself either if things suddenly become more than caring.” Ben suggested, knowing Rey would be nothing more than friend. They lived on opposite sides of the country, not to mention she was finishing school and had an entire life outside the little emails they shared. Based solely on her voice and one Instagram photo, Rey must have been beautiful, at the very least attractive. There was no way she’d be interested in a thirty-something year old with overgrown ears and anger issues.

“I think I can work with that.” Amilyn agreed, rising her tea cup in a quick toast.
Rey

I know I am supposed to use this number "judiciously" but…

thank you.

Rey

Thank you for today because I really needed that.

I needed someone to tell me I was too much in my head.

And you are pretty apt at doing that for me.

Rey

We make a pretty great team Ben.

Ben

You're welcome.

Ben

We are not too bad Kenobi.

Not too bad at all.

Chapter End Notes

Somebody's got a cruuuussshhh. Maybe two somebodies :) And they spoke to each other!
Any ideas of who Amilyn's man is? He is in this fic.

Fun fact: In the real world, I actually write more nonfiction pieces than fiction. It kind of why Rey is writing a nonfic piece.
Also...
Braid Essays: when two stories or pieces of information are weaved together to form a narrative. Usually share the same themes, and may or may not connect in the end. Usually one voice in the narrative shadows the other, to create texture to the piece-- I kind of use a warped version of this style in both Trusting December and Across Alternate Universes.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always welcomed! Also thank you for all the love and encouragement with this fic! It absolutely warms my heart!
This Is A New Day, A New Beginning

Chapter Summary

Rey is on the hunt for Ben's pseudonym. Meanwhile, Ben discusses Vader with an old friend.

Chapter Notes

FINALS ARE OVER AND I AM BACK! YAY!
So this is a bit plot heavy and more Rey centric than Ben. But some great Ben stuff happens too! And there is an Easter egg for those who know about the non-canon extended SW universe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rey

Dear god, tell me your pseudonym is not Armitage Hux.
Because that’s bloody awful.

Ben

No. That is a stupid name for a stupid person.

Rey

I am sensing some hostility here.

Rey

Do tell more.

Ben

You know that story I told you about my roommate.

Rey

No. Fucking. Way.

Who the hell would sleep with someone named Armitage?

Ben

A woman named Phasma.
“I never knew you read First Order Literary.” Finn commented as he sat down on the armchair across from the pile of rough drafts and a stack of old journal issues.

“Oh I don’t,” Rey answered, pursing her lips as she crossed off both the name G. Phasma and Armitage Hux from the list of editors on her legal pad. “It’s for a…project?”

“A project? I wonder what type of professor forces their students to read dark poetry.” Finn tried to joke, earning a confused look from Rey.

“All lot of professors Finn. Dark poetry is essentially poetry.” She deadpan, picking up her coffee mug. She swallowed the warm liquid, finding energy just from the sip. Ever since Skywalker offered to continue to workshop her work she’d been on edge. Unable to sleep properly, writing whenever she had free time. During her shift at the auto shop the previous afternoon, she dozed off while under a car. Luckily Han did not catch her moment of sleep depraved weakness. She was just concerned she would not live up to Skywalker’s expectations…at least she believed that was the main reason she was on edge.

Not the fact she spoke to Ben. A pool of heat swirled in her gut every time she thought of his voice. Or how she might be one step closer to figuring out who exactly Ben was in the literary world.

“Oh, okay,” Finn stuttered out, pushing further into the back cushion of the chair.

Noticing he was still there, staring at her with apprehension, Rey squinted at Finn. “Um, what can I do for you?” The last couple of weeks had been awkward between the two roommates. Finn was rarely home usually over at Rose’s, while Rey was constantly on her phone or laptop when she was at home. They maybe saw each other in a fleeting afternoon, when Rey came home from classes to change into her jumpsuit for work, or when Finn needed to shower and nap.

Despite the whole ‘personal space issues’ and ‘please stay out of my life’ debacle, Rey was afraid Finn would decide to up and leave. She could barely afford the apartment with Finn, not to mention he was a great roommate when he actually lived in the space.

“Nothing, just thought we can chill together today? Maybe hang out around here, since you have your ‘project’.” Finn offered, his eyes lingering on her list.

“I thought you’d be with Rose or something,” Rey shrugged, “We haven’t really had time to hang out in a while.” Rey reminded him, writing down the name Kylo Ren on her notepad. He’d only been credited as a leading editor for the last two years, she finally stumbling upon the name in the December 2015 issue.

“Well, she decided we needed some space….like ‘function as individuals not a pair’. ” Finn phrased awkwardly, likely repeating Rose’s words verbatim. “To be an independent couple, not co-dependent.” He finished, gazing glumly at his mug of tea.

“She broke up with you?” Rey asked hesitantly, not sure how to interpret Finn’s information.

“No. It’s a ‘break’.” Finn clarified, though clearly wasn’t happy with the situation. He was wearing his ‘sad hoodie’—an old pull-over he had since he was a teen, the one his first girlfriend in high
school bought for him as a break-up sweater. It was a faded bright blue, with questionable stains on
the collar and little worn in holes around the sleeves. She knew Finn’s uncle tried to throw it out
once, only for Finn to freak out about it until it was fished out the garbage.

“Like a Ross and Rachel type of break?” Rey had never seen a full episode of *Friends*, she more of
a *Seinfeld* person, but had caught enough of the show when Finn went through his binging fests to
know about a ‘Ross and Rachel Break’. Well that, and ‘pivot’.

Finn nodded his head up and down numbly.

“She thinks we were going too fast too soon. And then it didn’t help Poe made an appearance a
week ago.” Finn sipped his tea, hissing as the water lightly burned his tongue.

Rey completely forgot about Poe. She was quite snippety with him when he stopped by The Castle,
but she never actually thought he’d take her advice and actively seek Finn on his own.

“What happened? If I may ask,” Rey was still not sure where their boundaries laid—did she have
the right to ask about his life? Did he have the right to ask about hers? He was already opening up
on his own accord.

“Rose and I ran into Poe when we were stopping here to pick up one of my textbooks for
engineering, and well…They got along really well.” Rey’s eyebrow rose, trying to be shocked
Rose and Poe got along—but in all honesty, it wasn’t that surprising. They were both nice,
charismatic people who loved planes, Rose’s sister Paige, a former pilot. “And we caught up…”
Finn shoulders sagged, “He’s seeing someone back on the east coast—Amilyn.”

“What? He is?” Poe never told her *that*—not that she gave much room to talk. Now she was really
regretting not interrogating Poe when she had the opportunity.

“Yeah…and he thinks she’s the one.” Finn bit out, chewing on the side of his cheek.

Her jaw dropped and strange twinge of *something* prickling in her chest. Not exactly an ache…but
a kin of ache for Finn. Poe could only have been dating this woman for a few months, a *maximum*
of four months. Finn was with Poe for two years, and marriage was never even a thought. Or a
conversation. They were a ‘living in the moment’ romance, as Finn often put it.

“They met through a mutual friend and have been seeing each other ever since.” He exhaled, “And
I am not upset about that…because well, I have Rose and I really like Rose. I just wonder…” Finn
trailed off, staring down at the bruised and stuffed coffee table.

“You wonder why…why it didn’t work with you.” Rey supplied, Finn slumping further into the
cushions as his form of answer.

“Then Rose decided we should take a break…because of well everything. Thinks I should take
some time to sort my feelings out…” He mumbled, setting his tea down on the coffee table.

“Oh buddy.” She winced, patting a sympathetic hand on his knee. She was not well versed in the
trials and tribulations of romance, never having much time to dally on such things. Sure, she had
gone on a couple of dates here and there, but none of them ever amounted to a relationship or even
a second date. Poe and Jessika often blamed her lack of romantic relationships on simply being too
picky—having a certain image of who she wanted to be with and not a single man matching the
outline of her imagination. Maybe…maybe watching Finn and Poe’s relationship also didn’t help.
Or Jessika’s revolving door of men, her hot and cold attitude of romantic entanglements.

Rey glanced back at her pile of journals and her legal pad. She never told Finn about Ben.
Not that it was any of his business. But…

Rey felt weird admitting it to herself, but…she kind of liked Ben. In more than a friendly way. Which was ridiculous because she hardly even knew the man, let alone see what he looks like. For all she knew, he could look like some creepier or be a catfisher!

Okay…that was stupid. Of course, she knew Ben wasn’t a catfisher, he revealed far too much and he basically sent her on a scavenger hunt for his name. And he called…oh why was she still thinking about the phone call! Because she adored the sound of his voice, the logical side of her brain reminded her whenever her mind wander to him.

Her mind wander to him more than she’d like to admit.

“I…I think I might have met someone.” She admitted quietly, picking up another issue of the First Order. She flipped it open, to find the same list of editors from the last couple of issues. It was looking like her list was brought down to two names—Kylo Ren and B. J. Knight.

“What?!”

Rey had never seen such excitement from Finn in her entire life.

---

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Subject: My List Has Narrowed Down

Dear, dear Ben.

To think you thought I would have difficulty finding your name. Which did take some time and reading some pretty bad and maybe some pretty good writing, but I have narrowed it down.

Clearly you are not Anakin Vader, because he is dead.

And you are not Armitage Hux—because the name sounds utterly pretentious and you are not that pretentious—just pretentious enough.

1. Phasma is a woman. Enough said.

Which then leaves only two options:

Kylo Ren and B.J. Knight.

---

Ben almost barked laughter at the second name—mostly because once again his colleague, B.J. Knight, was mistaken for a man. The woman had been one of the longest running editors in the First Order, and a friend of Anakin’s. Given a promotion numerous times, B.J., or Bastila, as she was better known, declined every offer. She liked being an editor, and did not seek to be anything more. She lived comfortably with her husband Revan, a Philosophy professor at a NYU. Initially, she was to take the mantle for Anakin after his passing, but Snoke swept the vote before she had the opportunity.
“What’s got you in fit, Solo?” She also happened to be one of the few who knew his birth name.

Ben looked up from his laptop, to the open door of his office, to see the woman herself standing there with her mouth in a grim line. “Uh, a friend emailed me a joke…nothing major.” He closed the laptop, pushing it aside. “You can go ahead and come in.”

Bastila gave a nod, shutting the door behind her. She took the seat across from Ben’s desk, staring at him expectantly over the rim of her sharp bifocals. Her eyes flitted over the small stack of papers on his desk. “Working on a Saturday, the true definition of a workaholic.” Ben ignored the comment. He tried to work on his *actual* work at home the previous night, but found it difficult, becoming distracted by Rey’s manuscript and his own research. He decided to head back to the office for a couple of hours to finish his notes. “Well, you wanted to meet? Care to tell me why, I have lunch with Revan at noon.”

Taking a deep breath for courage, Ben pulled out a notebook from a drawer behind his desk. He kept most of his personal notes and thoughts tucked away in the black leather bound book. His recent entries focusing on three individuals in particular: Benjamin W. Kenobi, Anakin Vader, and well—Rey. “You were close with Anakin, you knew more about him than anyone else here.”

“I think we can both hold that title, Ben.” Bastila commented with a sad smile; a smile that seemed to always know more than she ever let on. “What about him?”

“Do you… do you know who his grandson is?” He blurted out, not bothering to beat around the bush. Stunned by the question, Bastila’s eye narrowed on Ben. His spoken words once again failed him—he wondered how he could possibly be his mother’s son with the amount of verbal tact he lacked. “The journal is suffering under Snoke tutelage, you and I both know that.”

“Ben is this about how he cut you work load in half?” She asked tersely. After walking out of the meeting on Friday, Snoke decided to lower the amount of articles Ben edited as punishment, giving him less say than he already had.

“No.” He answered sharply. “No, this has to do with the fact Snoke is hurting the journal. And the only way things might change is if Anakin’s grandson was in the picture.” Ben once loved his job, loved it a great deal, but it was difficult to see it a visionary’s work broken into unrecognizable shards. Anakin’s work and influence over the journal was fading away in every new issues since his death. Ben and Bastila two of the last remaining components of Anakin Vader’s era.

If anyone understood how Ben felt about the entire situation, it would be Bastila. She and Ben were similar on their outlook in life; there was good, and there was bad, but there was also the grey area everyone else truly operated and that could not be controlled. When he first started working at the First Order, she’d invite him over for dinner with her family, consisting of her husband and twin niece and nephew. If it weren’t for her convincing, Ben might not have taken Anakin’s offer as editor.

Bastila’s eyes soften, “Anakin…he always wanted to tell his grandson who he was, and wanted to be involved in his life. And he said he told the boy in his own way….but nothing has happened.” She said quietly, shrugging helplessly. “Ben, I am saying this as your friend—hell as someone who loves you like their own son—if the grandson has not made himself known, he never will.” She grinned sadly at Ben, a way a mother would if their son were on the cusp of figuring out a great discovery, or were about to do something painful…though Ben did not understand as he felt more in the dark about Anakin’s grandson than he did before. She took his silence as chance to change the subject. “Since we’re here, I might as well share the news—”

“What news?”
“I’m retiring, Ben.”

knightofren@holo.com

RE: My List Has Narrowed Down

I’ll make it easier for you.

Cross off B.J. Knight. She no longer works at the First Order, she only has one more week left before starting her retirement.

Which honestly makes things at work twenty times more difficult.

“Wait, let me get this straight…” Finn stood in front on the coffee table, pacing as he reiterated the story Rey told him, “You met this guy online and now you have the hot’s for his voice?”

Rey rolled her eyes, “Is that seriously all you got from our conversation? Not the fact he is helping me, and in some way I am helping him too?”

Finn halted, turning to with wide eyes. “I am more concerned with the fact this guy could be some weirdo—”

“I knew I should not have told you.” Rey huffed, packing up her stack of papers and laptop. “I am going back to my room. Let me know when you are leaving.”

“No.” He held out a hand to stop her. “No… I mean.” Finn shrugged helplessly, dropping back into the arm chair. “I just never considered…”

“Considered what?” Rey shot back, her eyebrows scrunching together, challenging him to finish his thought.

Finn struggled to find the words, his mouth opening and closing pathetically. “Well… that you’d ever be interested in anybody.” Wincing he shook his head, “I didn’t mean it like that it’s just…I never really pictured you liking anyone because your Rey. Independent woman.”

Rey frowned, adjusting her glasses precariously, “Do…do you think I am not capable of romantic feelings?” Finn did not respond, suddenly finding the scuffed wooden floorboards interesting. Tossing her bag down on the sofa, Rey stood tall, affronted by Finn’s implied accusation. “Because I can be fucking romantic as hell!” She argued, arms crossed defiantly.

Finn peaked up at Rey, a pitiful smile tugging at his lips. “Peanut, someone who is romantic does not say they are ‘fucking romantic as hell’—they just are.” He broke to her gently. Rey’s face crumpled, her mind sifting through all of her and Ben’s email exchanges. She did not try to act flirty or be obnoxious…Ben just brought out this wittier side of her, a side that wanted to be challenged and it excited her. Maybe he didn’t find their conversations as important as she did—he did have a life outside of their emails. But at the same time, he was also lonely, as he told her in so many words. If he didn’t like her as a friend or more, Ben would have ceased communication—he was harsh like that. Yet here they were three weeks later and discussing matters far beyond the structure of her non-fiction piece.
Deflated by his words, Rey’s arms dropped lazily by her side, the sleeves of her sweater hanging over the length of her hands. “Oh God. I’m an idiot.” She groaned, rubbing her eyes. “I’ve never really had the time or energy to like someone—this is all new to me!”

Attentively, Finn sat up on the edge of his seat, “No you’re not an idiot.” He reassured her, grabbing her arm comfortingly. “How about you tell me more about this ‘Ben’ guy? He can’t be all bad if he got you to like him without even trying.”

Rey smiled softly at her friend, “He’s probably the most brilliant man I’ve ever known.”

“Ben, I like my salad lightly tossed, not mushed to the pulp.” Leia commented as she poured herself a glass of wine.

Looking down, Ben found iceberg lettuce broken into smaller pieces than he originally cut up. “Oh, uh sorry.” He muttered, pushing away the bowl to the center of his mother’s kitchen counter. He continued to stare at the granite countertop, his thoughts drifting to his conversation with Bastila. She definitely knew more than she let on, but would not budge because of her unwavering loyalty to the deceased Anakin.

Frustrating did not even begin to describe his feelings about the situation.

Silently Leia mused as she sipped her dark, red wine. “Tell me son, what’s bouncing in that muck?”

“Mom…hypothetically speaking, if you had a grandchild who did not know you—but you wanted to know them, but were on your deathbed—”

Leia sighed heavily, sitting down on the barstool at the counter. “Ben, is this your way of telling me you knocked up some girl—”

“What?” Ben interrupted, “No—God no. I am not even seeing anyone—”

“That’s what they all say.” Ben pinched the bridge of his nose as his mother sent him a dubious glance over the rim of her wine glass. “But you were saying…”

“Would you purposefully hide things from someone you love?” Ben asked, raising his eyes to his mother’s thoughtful expression. Her eyebrows were pulled together, as though she were about to give a riveting speech to a massive crowd.

“Yes.” Leia answered with little remorse. “Not everyone needs to know everything, Ben.”

The childish part of Ben wanted to be surprised by his mother’s response…yet the grown adult, who grew up with his mother’s directness and eloquent debating skills, expected this answer. She lied to him readily if it meant to spare his feelings. For a mother of an emotionally unstable son, Leia became a pro at maneuvering his questions. Deflection was an art form.

Ben swallowed tightly, his right hand drumming against the counter. His mother’s concerned gaze forced Ben to tuck away any further questions for another day.
“Oh god.” Finn breathed, eyes widening the longer he stared at the computer screen.

“What?” Rey asked, tucked into the corner of the sofa. Her curled arms tightened around the blue throw pillow, her panic spiking the longer she waited. After some boy talk with Finn and ordering Chinese take-out, Rey checked her email to find Ben responded.

And told her his pseudonym.

For a solid half hour she freaked out, nearly throwing up the orange chicken she ate when Finn suggested looking up ‘Kylo Ren’. With great coaxing, and a promise to get coffee tomorrow, Rey agreed to let Finn Google Search Ben…well ‘Kylo Ren’.

“Is it bad?” The superficial part of Rey called out from behind her pillow shield.

A choking-gurgle sound rattled through Finn’s throat. “Uh Rey, you need to see this.”

“I—” Her laptop was roughly shoved into her face, the screen too close to make out the image. Shoving Finn away with her foot, Rey pulled the laptop far away enough. Blinking her eyes a few times, her sight adjusted to the bright light of the screen… “Oh, god.”

“Yup.” Finn grinned, kicking her ankle lightly with his slipper clad foot.

Rey began to wince, yet a mildly giddy grin formed. “He’s—”

“Unconventionally hot. Like this dude should not be hot, but he is and it is not right.” Finn declared, though Rey barely paid attention, her eyes glued to the image displayed on the screen.

Finn was in no way wrong. Kylo Ren…or well, Ben was indeed a handsome man, though not in a traditional sense. A looming figure and broad shoulders should have been intimidating, yet were inviting to her. The shock of dark wavy locks against his pale skin were eye catching. His features should not have meld together well—a long face and nose, the sharp angles of his face, yet the softness of his dark eyes and lips…she did not expect Ben to look like that.

In all honesty, she wasn’t too sure what she expected.

Embarrassingly so, Rey was unable to look away… almost afraid she’d hallucinated his entire image. The logical side of her brain reminded Rey, her imagination was not as powerful as she’d like to believe, her mind under no circumstances creative enough to form the image of Ben she saw before her.

The picture was from a literary event in New York a year and a half ago, Kylo Ren…Ben standing beside an ailing Anakin Vader. Glancing at the top of the tab, Rey noticed it was from the release and book signing for The Longing You Seek. She recalled seeing Kylo Ren’s name attached to several Anakin Vader projects and articles, the protégé to the late author. It never occurred to Rey to connect the dots between Vader and his protégé and the Kylo Ren the editor when searching through the First Order journals…

Which meant the mentor Ben was telling her about was Anakin Vader.
Anakin Vader.

He was your mentor.

Ben

You googled me?

Rey

Yes. Please don’t hate me. You kind of opened your own can of worms there Ben.

Ben

Of course not!

In fact it makes me feel a little better.

Because I might have google searched you, since you did give me a full name.

Rey

HA!

How did that go? ;)

Ben

You’re a ghost Rey Kenobi.

Rey

Well, when privacy is finally an option, I take it in stride.

Rey

But seriously…

You worked with Anakin Vader, and are an amazing editor and

Why the hell did you even consider helping me?

Ben

‘Just because you are great at something does not mean
It is what you are meant to do.’
A quote from my counselor.

Plus, I already told you,

My work life is falling apart since Vader’s death.

Rey

Not to be over stepping my bounds but…

Maybe do something about it?

‘If it matters that much to you, then

Make an effort to make a change.’

A quote from one of the many environmental
ads that play non-stop on the radio

Ben

I tried. Believe me, I tried.

One of my co-workers suggested to let go,

Since that’s what she’s doing through retirement.

To go start my own journal.

Rey

Well, why don’t you?

Ben

What?

Rey

Go start your own journal. Or blog. Or something.

Ben

But I am contracted for another year.

Rey

Doesn’t mean you can’t start.

Nothing happens overnight.

Chapter End Notes
Sooooo. Rey knows how Ben looks! And she is crushing :)

And what exactly transpired during the rest of Ben and Bastila's conversation? Hmmmm. We shall find out soon!
Next chapter we'll get more into what's going on in Ben's head, especially with this new idea...

Also, expect more characters to slowly creep into the story; Ben and Rey just don't realize how ridiculously they are connected outside their little bubble of communication.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated!
Your Arguments are Vague and Unconvincing

Chapter Summary

Rey and Ben discover they both have the day off. Texting ensues.

Chapter Notes

So a lot happens in this chapter.  
Like the summary does not do this chapter justice, but it is the only way to not spoil anything. 
Anyways, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ben

When do you meet with your prof again?

Rey

Wednesday.

Which reminds me, I need to send you

A revised version of my piece.

Ben

Great minds think alike,

I was just going to ask you that.

Can you send it to me by nine tonight? It’ll

Give me enough time to read it thoroughly and

give notes before you need to show it to your prof.

Rey

Will do captain…

O Captain! My Captain!

Ben
Did you just quote Dead Poets Society to me?

Rey

:D

Why of course! It’s the best, and it is a farewell.

Since I figure you are off to go do your editorial duties.

Like a real adult.

Ben

I am a real adult.

Unlike SOMEONE I know…

Not going to say any names.

But it begins with R and ends in y.

Rey

Is it Ray? Because I do not know a Ray.

Ben

Nope. I think I should point out they are female

and she has a dog she sends pictures of to

EVERYONE

Rey

You don’t like BB?

BB is great! I think once you meet him in person

You’d love him to bits!

Ben

It’s not so much I don’t like BB, or dogs.

Because I love dogs.

Rey

I know you love dogs.

Rey

I recall you sent me a very detailed seven page
essay on how miniature schnauzers
are the superior dog breed. (Which they are not!)
But you’d prefer a beagle b/c they are ‘friendlier’.

Ben

Beagles ARE friendlier!

Ben

I didn’t actually expect you to read my entire rant.

Rey

Of course I read the entire thing!
I’d read anything you sent me.
Even if it was nutrition facts from a box of cereal!

Ben

Well…thanks.

Ben

Anyways, its because I had to give my dog to my mom
when I moved into my apartment a few months back
since pets are not allowed in the building.

Rey

That’s…that’s why you are annoyed with the pictures of BB.

Ben

Well…pictures of any dog.
But when you put it that way it sounds stupid.

Rey

It’s not stupid.
It’s kind of funny. But of course not funny.
Because you really miss your dog. :(

Rey

I’m pretty sure I’d feel that way if I didn’t have BB with me.
Rey

Wait a minute—it’s like 10:30 where you’re at,
Why are you still texting me? You have a magazine to save.
Or destroy, depending on how you look at it.

Ben
You do realize I CAN work from home, right?
I do not spend every waking minute in an office.
Especially since my work load has been cut in half.

Rey
Your work load got cut in half? Ouch.

Rey
And I DO realize you can work from home
It’s just I have this image of you sitting
All stuffy and professional behind a desk.
Well stuffy and professional all the time
if I am perfectly honest.

Ben
Which pictures did you FIND OF ME?

Rey
The ones that come up when you
search ‘Kylo Ren’ in google.
Most are from the book signing.

Ben
Well rest assured, I do not live, eat, and
sleep in a business suit.

Ben
7488473346748.jpg

Rey
OMFG

Are those Hufflepuff pajama pants?!
Because I am pretty sure I have the same exact pair
Except in Slytherin.

Ben

You’re a Slytherin?
I feel like I cannot be associated with you.
Evil. Evil all around you.

Rey

Hiss, hiss ;P

Rey

I’m even wearing them right now!
Like you said great minds think alike!

Ben

Shouldn’t you be in class or working?
Not lounging around in nerdy pajamas.

Rey

First of all, it is 7:30am here in the wonderful west coast.
Second of all, since I am effectively banned from my creative
writing class I have nothing to do on Mondays.

Ben

Nothing at all? Why?

Rey

Well, I usually work Tuesdays thru Fridays in the afternoon,
and have a couple of morning classes.
But I purposely planned for Mondays to be a light load.
Always need one of those days in the week.
That is very smart. I did the opposite for most of my college career. Overloaded schedules and never sleeping summed up my life.

Rey

Sleep is kind of important my friend. I loooovvvvee sleep.

I try to do the whole pulling an all nighter thing and I can’t.

I crash around 2am.

Ben

All nighters are not all they are cracked up to be. As I have grown older I’ve be avoiding staying up later.

Rey

Must I remind you again, you are thrity-two.

Not sixty-two.

Rey

You are not dying old man.

You look far from it.

Ben

Ya know, you have been throwing around what I look like A lot recently and I realize I honestly have no visual idea of who I am talking to.

Ben

NOT THAT THIS IS A SEND ME PICS SITUATION.

Ben

I PROMISE I AM NOT PERVY

Rey

*cries*

I am cackling. Utterly cackling.
Well, I don’t really take pictures of myself

Rey

I am actually really confused on how the selfie camera works.

I always drop my phone when I try.

Ben

You are asking the wrong person.

Almost every picture taken of me was taken by my mother.

Rey

You’re close to your mum?

Ben

Well, my options were to either be close to my

Mother or be close to my father.

I choose the option that would lead to the least harm.

Ben

As in my mother would kill me if I ever lost contact with her.

Ben

She’s friends with politicians.

She knows where to hide a body, Rey.

Rey

My god. You are a melodramatic shit.

And I love it, lol.

Ben

Thank you. Being melodramatic comes with

the territory of being a writer.

Ben

But in all honesty, I was not in contact with either of my parents for awhile.

Then my mom moved nearby, and I got into a mild

car accident and she was at the hospital within the hour.
Rey

And that’s when you realized it’s not fun or easier to be on your own.

Ben

Yup.

Rey

Well, shit. I could have told you that.

Ben

Well, I didn’t know you 4 years ago

Rey

Right.

Rey

Can I admit something?

Ben

Shoot.

It’s not like anything is necessarily off limits.

Rey

I sometimes forget we’ve only know each other a short while.

Ben

I know. I feel it too. It feels longer.

Rey

It’s like we were DESTINED TO MEET :O

Ben

Don’t tell me you believe in ‘fate’ and ‘destiny’ shit.

Because I think I might need to ‘suddenly lose your number’.

Rey

ARSEHOLE.

Of fucking course I do.

And you do too :)
Ben

No I don’t.

I do not believe everything is ‘meant to be’.

Rey

Nope, you believe it. Deep down.

You’re just in denial.

Ben

Then explain to me why on Earth I would believe that.

Because statistically speaking, neither one of us

would believe in ‘fate’.

You know foster child and a child of a broken home.

Rey

Ok, now you are jaded. Not everyone is like that.

And ninety percent of statistics are made up ;P

Rey

And I thought your parents divorced when you were in college.

Ben

They did. Doesn’t mean they weren’t separated while I was growing up.

They broke up and made up at least four times while I was in

middle school. They loved each other.

They just didn’t know how to be domestic together.

Rey

Ahhh, the fog is clearing… I think I can now see Ben.

Your parent’s relationship is the ‘reason’ you don’t believe in ‘fate’ and ‘destiny’

Because they probably projected this idea they were destined to meet,

and it was fate. But then things didn’t work out and they divorced.

Ben

Have you been in contact with my therapist?
Rey

No. I am just that amazing at reading you :)

Ben

Fine. Yes, my parents said they believed they were always destined to meet.

Mostly because my Uncle Luke set them up by total accident.

FYI, my uncle is an absolute laser-brain.

Rey

Wait a minute, is this the same uncle who use to teach you?

Ben

Yes.

Rey

Ok, on the same page now. Continue great sir.

Ben

Okay, what I am about to tell you might sound like total bullshit

but I shit you not, it happened.

Rey

Ready Benny.

Rey

Get it? Like ‘ready steady’ but not b/c you name is Ben.

Ben

I got it.

Rey

I thought it was clever.

Ben

You know, I appreciate your friendship, so I’ll just turn the other

cheek to your bad jokes.

Rey

If you saw me now, I’d be rolling my eyes.
Ben

I never said you weren’t a comedic genius. By the way, you’re not.

But the joke was awful.

Rey

Fine. Just tell me your family’s ridiculous story.

Ben

Okay…My uncle and mother were twins separated at birth—Kind of a parent trap type of situation, but not. Apparently my grandmother died in child birth, and my grandfather could not handle the burden of children while being heart broken.

So my uncle lived with some distant relatives in Utah while my mom grew up as the daughter of a couple her mother had been friends with.

Rey

Wow. Not cool, I guess.

Oh, you’re still typing

Ben

Let’s fast forward seventeen years, both are attending university—

The same university, become friends, even almost DATE (I know gross)

And find out they are siblings. Because my uncle had been stupid, (like I said laser-brain) got injured and stuck in a snow storm with his roommate—my father—the roommate Uncle Luke raved and ranted about to my mother for ages, who she had yet to meet. She kind of already hated my father. My uncle needed blood, and he and my mother were a perfect match.

Medical record were then called, and well the rest is history.

Rey

That is some soap opera level drama and connections.

Ben

Which is why I don’t believe in fate or connections

because my family loved to shove it down my throat
retelling how my uncle, mom, and dad all met.

Plus, my family is apparently a magnet for this type of stuff.

Rey

Ben,

As your closest friend (I am making this assumption, do not correct me)

I HIGHLY DOUBT, you will end up dating your long lost sister. Or initially

hate your true love-future spouse, and will hopefully NEVER get

injured in a snow storm.

Ben

I live in the New York area. The last one already happened.

I slipped on ice this past March.

Rey

We can shoot for two out of three!

Ben

I agree; chances are slim I will potentially date a long lost sister.

As far as I know, I am the only child.

Still doesn’t change my stance on believing, or really giving into letting

fate and destiny rule my scope of the world.

Rey

BUT SEE YOU STILL BELIEVE IN IT ALL BECAUSE YOU ACKNOWLEDGE IT IS REAL.

Furthermore, I think to truly enjoy and claim The Scavenger and the Prince is their FAVORITE

You need to believe in the power of fate, coincidences, and destiny.

Ben

It’s an amazing novella and I would be an idiot

to not recognize Kenobi’s genius.

Ben

But that doesn’t mean the Scavenger and the Prince were destined for each other.

Rey
I never said the Scavenger and the Prince were destined for each other.

Their paths were simply designed by fate to cross.

Did we read the same book?

Ben

Wait.

You know the Scavenger and the Prince is a romance, right?

Rey

What?!

No. It’s not.

Ben

Um, yes it is.

Rey

NO ITS NOT.

Ben

YES IT IS.

Rey

Prove it!

Incoming Call…

Ben

A rush of blind terror surged through Rey. She flung her cell phone across the sofa, the old Android bouncing off the grey cushion. He wasn’t supposed to call! They agreed calling was only for emergencies…but she didn’t want to let the call go the voicemail. Especially since she was just texting him—it would look like she was actively avoiding him. Which she was admittedly doing that very moment.

Shoving away her anxiety, Rey dived for her cell phone. Swiftly she swiped the screen of her phone, answering the call before the buzzing ended.

“Hello?” Rey spoke into the receiver, trying to not to sound as out of breath as she felt.

“Grab your copy of The Scavenger and The Prince and turn to page seventy-four.” He demanded, not bothering with a greeting. Not that it would matter; they’d been texting back and forth for the last three hours.
“It’s buried under a bunch of crap in my bedroom.” Rey explained, sitting back up on the sofa.

“I’ll wait.” Ben answered, his deep voice causing a wave a warmth through Rey.

She rolled her eyes. Seriously, she needed to calm down. He was just some guy… just some guy. A guy who was open about his past, loved his dog so much he became emotional looking at dog pictures in general, and wore Hufflepuff pajama pants. He was also just a guy who decided to call her to prove a point about their favorite book.

She suppressed a girlish giggle—they had a favorite book!

“Well because it is an adventure novel,” Rey set the phone on her bed, crouching down to the short, overstuffed bookshelf on the right. “The Prince runs away, tries to become someone new. He bumps into this scavenger. She decides to capture him, and take him back because she wants the reward money. They become friends, and realize they are alike and she lets him go,” She thumbs through the rows of novels and handbooks on her shelf, coming up short. “Damn it—it’s not on the bookshelf. It might be in a different stack.”

“Well, I can see how it can be consider purely magical realism-adventure. But it’s not,” Rey rolled her eyes, dropping down on her stomach. Reaching her arm, Rey felt around under her bed. She swore she was rereading the book before bed a few days previous. It might have fallen off her bed in her sleep. “They form an instant connection the moment they meet.”

“She stabs him!” Rey cried out, slightly horrified. Offended by the actions in the book, she sits up.

“And he knocks her unconscious!” Ben exclaims, as though mocking Rey’s indignant outburst. “But he catches her gracefully. Like a prince would.” He defends earnestly. “They both play dirty—it tells the reader these characters are equals.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that.” Rey agrees, absentmindedly playing with the edge of her duvet. “Still doesn’t explain how it is a romance.”

“I am building up to an argument, Rey,” Her name sounded pleasant from him. Short, sweet, and not too long—a firm, yet gentle press. “Despite not initially liking the other, they realize they are alike—”

“And he stabs her!?!” Rey cried out, slightly horrified. Offended by the actions in the book, she sits up.

“She stabs him!” Rey cried out, slightly horrified. Offended by the actions in the book, she sits up.

“And he stabs her unconscious!” Ben exclaims, as though mocking Rey’s indignant outburst. “But he catches her gracefully. Like a prince would.” He defends earnestly. “They both play dirty—it tells the reader these characters are equals.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that.” Rey agrees, absentmindedly playing with the edge of her duvet. “Still doesn’t explain how it is a romance.”

“I am building up to an argument, Rey,” Her name sounded pleasant from him. Short, sweet, and not too long—a firm, yet gentle press. “Despite not initially liking the other, they realize they are alike—”

“But they were taking turns for privacy. She accidently bumps into him while he is shirtless, which
leads to them having a very heated argument—"

“Ben, just because people argue does not mean it leads to love or lust or whatever.”

“He doesn’t need to be shirtless, but he is!” Ben continues to argue, “Its vulnerability, Rey. The Prince is vulnerable, but only to the scavenger. He never explained or opened up about what he felt until he met the scrappy scavenger.” He stresses with passion, each word articulated with care only a lover of the work could possess. His bleeding heart believed every word he spoke on the novella. “Then the moment by the fire.” He sighed deeply, Rey feeling a blush bloom on her neck at the sound. “You cannot tell anyone this—”

“Like I know anyone you know!” Rey interrupted, her hands growing clammy as she struggled to find her book. Where the hell was it?

“I cry every time I read the fire scene.” He admitted quietly, as though it was his most cherished secret. She’d never tell anyone else—especially since no many people had read The Scavenger and the Prince, let alone enjoyed it—but she sobbed every time she read the fire scene. She remembered sitting between towering stacks on the library floor, crying silently as The Scavenger and the Prince held hands in the glow of the fire. No one was around her, and the book had been released after Kenobi’s death the previous year. No one had yet to venture to read the book in the library, except little thirteen year old Rey. She smelled the book when she first checked it out, the pages emitting a newly print fragrance Rey had never been accustomed to in her young life. Tears stains marked the new copy; she furiously tried to rub the dampness away with the edge of her sleeve. Yet the page remained warped, forever tainted.

She wanted to talk to someone, needed to talk to anyone about the novella. And here she was, nine years later. She finally found someone who felt as strongly as she felt, and cried just like she did about her favorite book. Their favorite book.

Rey paused her search, dropping her belongs back on her desk. She picked up her phone, tapping off speaker. She pressed the phone to her ear, “I have many, many, many feelings on the fire scene. And I need to know your opinions ASAP.” She plopped herself down on her bed, listening to Ben attentively.

Rey’s jostling of the bed knocked over her propped up pillows. Peaking from under the pillow, her worn copy of The Scavenger and The Prince laid, along with bookmarked copy of The Longing You Seek.

“Okay… I can now understand why you think, and how it may very well be… a romance.” Rey agreed lightly.

Ben smirked, opening his fridge to find something to make himself for dinner. He quickly tapped on his phone, setting the call on speaker. “My English degree likes to be put to use every once in a while,” He joked, setting the container of fresh asparagus on the counter.

“I hear movement,” Rey muttered, “What are you doing that requires so much shuffling?”

“Well, it’s already past six in the afternoon here,” he said, reminding her of the three hour time difference, “I’m making dinner.”

“Ooo, you know how to cook?” Ben shook his head at her teasing. Once the awkwardness of hearing each other’s voices and not having the leisure of a backspace button faded away, Ben and
Rey fell into their rhythm of conversation. She’d tease and quip, he’d respond dryly and deadpan.

“Yes, I am a grown man who had lived on his own for five years. I know how to cook,” Ben opened the packaged chicken, carrying the raw poultry to the kitchen sink, “its basic survival skills.”

“Then I suck at surviving because I am a god awful cook.” Rey commented, the sound of dog painting near the phone. “BB, stop that.” Rey giggled to her dog, Ben imagining her pushing the mutt away with a playful shoo.

He turned on the faucet with his elbow, rising the chicken. “You can’t be that bad—”

“I can’t even make Minute Rice.” She stated seriously.

“That’s bad.” Ben frowned against his growing grin, flashes of a girl struggling to follow the instructions and ultimately burning the white rice playing in his mind.

“Yup. I am planning on just ordering take out tonight. Chinese or Italian are my options for this evening.” She announced, taking on the bravado of high class restaurant waiter.

“Do you have anything in your fridge?” Ben asked, placing the rinsed chicken on the cutting board. He heard Rey move around her apartment, then the refrigerator door open and humming loudly.

Clattering and shifting was heard from her end; a quiet ‘shit’ muttered when a bottle was knocked over. “Uh, wilting tomatoes, questionable yogurt, half a block of Colby Jack cheese, milk, sour cream—”

“Take out the cheese, milk, and sour cream.” Ben ordered, starting to chop the chicken for his dinner.

“I think the milk might be past due.” Rey winced out, not interested in finding out if her assumption were true.

“Smell it.” Ben shrugged, not caring if she did not care to smell the milk. “If it smells gross or funny toss it. If not it should be fine.” He reassured her as he went to prepare the stove.

“What—are you going to teach me how to cook?” She questioned with mirth.

“Rey Kenobi, here is your first lesson—how to make a decent mac and cheese not from a box.”

“Are…are you cooking?”

Rey spun around, a wooden spoon held in one hand and her phone in the other. She was still dressed in the Slytherin matching set pajamas she was wearing when he left that morning. Her hair was tied up in three buns lining from the top to the base of her skull and her thick glasses were perched on her nose. Relatively, she appeared normal—except for her beaming grin and boiling water on the stove.

“Yes!” She chirped back, Finn stunned by the brightness of her response. “Ben is teaching me.” With a joyful spin, she went back to stirring the boiling pasta, chattering away with Ben on the phone. No—Giggling.

“Okay…” Finn mumbled, slowly backing away from the kitchenette area to the hall. In the three
years Finn knew Rey, she never giggled. Or spun like a girl going to her prom. Rey laughed heartily or snickered, and as far as he knew, she was a happy person. But never… glowing. Rey was glowing as she spoke animatedly to Ben, like an entirely different side to her was unlocked when she interacted with him in any capacity.

Rey…she was falling. Fast.

And she didn’t even know.

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

Subject: Non-Fiction Piece Update

Ben,

Here is the revised copy of my piece.

See, before our deadline ;)

It’s still a little rough around the edges. Be nice, or I will spam you with pictures of the weird old man who lives down the hall from me.

Your Favorite Scavenger,

Rey

P.S. Here is a pic of my subpar mac and cheese (you can probably do better)

Nonficpiecerevision4.docx

Macandcheese.jpg

knightofren@holo.com

Re: Non-Fiction Piece Updated

Rey,

Yeah, like a minute before our deadline. I guess I will have to stay up all night to read your paper and won’t be able to talk tonight. See? This is what happens when you procrastinate.

Also, do you honestly expect all constructive criticism to be ‘nice’? Even constructive criticism from me? I thought you knew me better than that.

Also, that is a weirdly specific picture to spam. Do you often taken pictures of odd men, because if you do then I think we have bigger issues to worry about than your creative writing grade.

Your Favorite Knight,

Ben
Rey huffed, shifting to get comfortable on her bed. She and Ben finally ended their phone call when she finished making her macaroni and cheese, deciding to call each other later. She sent him her next draft of her non-fiction piece along with a picture of her finished dinner.

He even sent her a smiley face back. Ben never used smiley faces of emojicons. As silly as is was, the little gesture caused a flutter in her chest.

Rey picked up her phone again.

He squeezed his eyes shut, then blinked then open.

Even though he did practically nothing productive all day, Ben was exhausted. Well, he wouldn’t say it was productive in the traditional sense of the word, but he did speak with Rey for most of the day.

Okay, the entire day. It was nice. Extremely nice, to the point he was tempted to pick up his cell phone and call her again to continue talking. He’d listen to her talk about anything, even if it was something mundane like the weather or bizarre like questionable scientific theories.

But he needed to read her revisions. Ben was still her ‘mentor’ as they loved to phrase to each other, and was obligated to keep his promise to give constructive feedback. Even if the lines of mentor and friendship were beginning to blur into something else entirely.

As he clicked on Rey’s revised copy, his cell phone buzzed. Distractedly, he swiped open his phone while he began reading the Word Document. He glanced down briefly, believing the message to be from his mother.

It wasn’t.

Instead a photo of smiling young woman with messy buns and the sincerest eyes stared back at him.

This…this was Rey.

She was earnestly beautiful. From the dimples impressed on her cheeks, her full joyful grin, to the sharp hazel of her eyes. Natural confidence gleamed from the hastily taken photo, the flash from the camera too bright but did nothing to dampen the beauty she radiated.

Thanks for the help today and well, talking :D

Shit.

He was screwed.

He had high standards and Rey somehow was meeting them. Every. Single. One. Even surpassing beyond anyone he could ever imagine.

With shaky hands, he sent a quick text: Anytime. Talk to you tomorrow :)
He pressed ‘send’ the bundles of nerves in his chest finally untangling. Dear god help him; was he going to be like this all the time?

Chapter End Notes

Ben you smitten, and yes Rey will give you butterflies forever :)

Also if you have not noticed, Rey and Ben have texts and emails that are not seen in this fic aka the 7 page essay (which was more like 3 pages, Rey was exaggerating) on miniature schnazers.

So a lot to unpack friends!
Let me know what to think, what were your favorite parts/lines/moments--whatever! I love discussing the characters and the plot with you guys! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! :)

Also, I have somewhat of an update schedule. It's posted on my tumblr @intp-slytherin97, where my rant about Rey being a Slytherin and Ben a Hufflepuff can be found as well.
Chapter Summary

Rey finally meets with Skywalker.
Ben decides his next steps.

Chapter Notes

So I wasn't supposed to update this fic this weekend, but my brain is only producing material for 'Of Penmanship and Discourse' instead of my other fics. Which means you all get a new chapter! Yay!

My laptop has this awful thing called autocorrect, which does more harm than good; typos will be fixed throughout the week :)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rey

Do you know any foreign languages?

Ben

Only Spanish. And it’s not even the Spanish I learned from high school.

Ben

One of my best friends is from Mexico.

Rey

What?

Mr. I Do Not Have Any Friend’s, best friend is from Mexico?

You sir, are full of lies.

Ben

Well, he doesn’t live in the country anymore.

Why did you ask if I know any foreign languages?

Rey
I’m watching a French film.

It keeps on getting recommended to me on Netflix, and I thought ‘why not?’

Ben

I sadly do not know French.

I know enough to be relatively polite and that’s about it.

Ben

Which movie is it?

Rey

Amelie.

Rey

I'm barely three minutes in. Nothing major has happened. All exposition.

Rey

Do you want to watch it with me?

Ben

You mean start the movie at the same time?

And like watch it together that way.

Because I am not flying out to California on a Tuesday night.

Now if it was the weekend, well maybe the odds would be in your favor :)

Rey

And here I thought you’d do anything for me.

*rolls eyes*

Of course I mean starting at the same time!

Rey

But I am holding you to that.

Rey

Let me know when you find it.

Ben

Found it.
“So, who is supposed to speak first in this type of situation?” Rey asked, gnawing on her upper lip. Nervous did not even scratch the surface of Rey’s emotions. Embarrassed. Humiliated. Extremely determined…perplexed? Yes, perplexed seemed to correctly encapsulate her overall feelings. In fact it seemed the best description for this situation; sitting in Skywalkers cramped office with his silver cat glaring daggers at her.

The slinky thing probably smelled BB on her.

Rey had been greeted with a muttered to ‘come in’ and terrifying hiss from her professor’s companion. Skywalker did not bat an eyelash at the sound, engrossed in a copy of First Order Literary. He huffed at the contents on the page before tossing the journal with its older brothers and sisters of publishing past on the far corner of his desk.

He considered her question with a careless shrug. “I’m not too sure.” Skywalker admitted, reclining back in his seat. The decade’s old, wooden desk chair creaked on its bolts, Rey tempted to demand Skywalker got up so she could fix the annoyance. Working with Han made her a semi-pro at fixing anything with a little twist of a screwdriver and duct tape. Not the most logical forms of maintenance, but practical enough for appliances and furniture to last until a professional could get their hands involved. Tiredly, Skywalker sipped his macha milk. Rey refrained from gagging at the bright green of the beverage. He did not bother to wipe away the foamy residue of his milk, letting the liquid mix in his beard as he spoke to Rey. “This has never happened before.”

“You’ve never kicked a student out of your class?” Rey’s eyebrows knitted together. Surely not. She could not have been the first student kicked out, especially with the tall tales she heard of his aggressive former student.

“No,” Luke stated, an edge in his tone. As though reminding Rey she was no one special, just a girl with a bit of attitude he did not have the energy to contend with. “I’ve kicked out students plenty of times. It’s a seminar course, Rey. Not everyone can keep up.” He stroked his beard, picking up a handkerchief when he felt the remains of his milk. Once his chin was dry, he sat up straighter, appearing more like the professor the university claimed him to be. “They’ve just never returned.”

“Oh,” She uttered involuntarily. She was just a girl who had balls enough to come stomping back to ask for another chance. From their interactions, Rey was unable to figure out if Skywalker liked or despised her out of line efforts.
The annoying cat pounced on the desk, Skywalker gently nudging his pet away from his papers. Ancient bright blue eyes stared unblinking at her, the silver beast leaping on to her lap without warning. Rey’s arms flew high, intimidated by those big feline eyes. For most of her adolescences, Rey spent a few hours a week volunteering at various animal shelters, finding a kinship with the innocent dogs and cats. Never had there been an animal she did not love or one that did not like her back; it was as though a silent understanding of abandonment translated between herself and the animals. A sacred bond of sorts.

This was not the case with Skywalker’s cat.

“I wouldn’t shove him off, R2 has quiet the temper.” Skywalker warned, shuffling his papers around in search of her manuscript. He grumbled to himself as he struggled to find his copy, though found the piece moments later. Rey tried not to be offend when he pulled her paper from his large stack of First Order Literary journals. Of course, he’d let her paper get lost in the abyss of his office, not even included in the class folder.

With some maneuvering, Rey reached into her backpack for her legal pad and manuscript. R2 growled impatiently at her movements, but eventually curled into a sliver mound on her lap.

For once, Rey had clear evidence Skywalker read her work. Sloppy green pen marks dotted across his copy of her manuscript. There were few blurbs and underlines, though Rey tired her best to not let this dissuade her. Her professor might have more to say than what was written. Rey simply expected more—she expected her copy to bleed with green pen, as she’d seen on some of her peer’s manuscripts. Skywalker paid attention to a select few in the class; Rey realizing she was not a favorite within the first few assignments.

A silly part of Rey hoped since her work was detached from the rest of the class, Skywalker would give more of his insight to her work.

Or maybe she merely became accustomed to a new pattern of feedback.

Even in digital format, Ben’s remarks echoed against her text. As though his writing were to be a companion beside her own. To offer support; to propose retaliation. In three weeks, Ben found the tick of her writing, the soul of her prose.

“You… have a clear narrative voice.” Skywalker’s compliment sounded forced; he did not believe his own words, merely reciting for her entertainment.

“Thank you,” He sent her a glower. Rey shrank into her seat. “Right—no talking. Got it.” She huffed; leave it to her professor to enforce workshop rules outside of the classroom.

Indifferently, Skywalker flipped through the pages as he skimmed over his comments, “There are a few grammatical errors, but nothing glaringly obvious.” He turned back to the front page, eyeing the manuscript as a new found mystery. Setting her piece down, Skywalker braced his hands on top of his desk. His eyes twinkled conspiratorially, “I must ask…who’s your second eyes?”

Excuse me?” Rey squinted at Skywalker, pushing up her glasses.

“Who has been reading your work, helping you?” He leaned down to his left, picking up from another stack of papers on the floor. Focused, he leafed through the disarray, plucking out three other essays. “You have been my student for almost half a semester. I know your level of skill. I’ve marked your progress,” The essays were pushed towards her. Rey blinked in surprise; all final copies of her last three pieces in Skywalker’s seminar. He kept her work? This she did not expect. “Rey, you do have raw talent. I haven’t seen talent like yours in years.” He sighed with pride, “Not
since my own nephew.”

“Your nephew’s a writer?” Rey asked, wincing half a second later once she realized the questions invasive nature

Skywalker’s mouth turned up; not quite a smile, but a memory of one. She understood—sometimes muscles only went through the motions, unable to remember the formula of feeling joy. “Yes… well, he used to be. The best… he used to be the best.” Regret painted his features, reminding Rey of the many social workers who’d share the sentiment. Speaking of fondly of nameless old cases, as though they could have done more than they already tired with great effort to do.

“Did you ever tell him that?” She ventured, knowing she was stepping a boundary, but there was a familiarity in his voice. A familiar tone, calming her nervous and giving her the courage to ask.

“No.”

Rey’s knowledge went as far as what Skywalker’s non-fiction novels exposed to the world; his nephew was a troubled young man. Anger issues and anxiety made him a ticking time bomb. She knew the aftermath of his nephew’s departure; his sister and brother-in-law’s divorce. Then nothing more. Skywalker stopped writing and became somewhat of a recluse before resuming his position in the university’s English Department.

“Anyways,” Skywalker cleared his throat, breaking the awkward tension in the room. R2 purred at the sound of his owner’s voice. “I am asking because your writing has greatly improved. Whoever is helping you, giving you feedback—continue to work with them.”

A questioned danced on the edge of Rey’s tongue; why was he encouraging her to seek outside help while the entire course floundered? Just as she opened her mouth, a little voice in her head—sounding suspiciously like Ben’s—reminded her to reel back. She needed to be in Skywalker’s good graces if she wanted to excel in the course.

“I have mostly been using the internet. Met someone to read my work; I trust them.” She vaguely answered, shrugging for good measure.

Not a lie, but not entirely the truth. A stern, selfish part of Rey wanted to keep her friendship with Ben to herself. Skywalker did not need to know who worked with her. He simply needed to know she had trusted eyes reviewing her work. A strange sense of fear shadowed over Rey at the idea of telling Skywalker about Ben—would her professor view her as a cheat? Seeking help from a professional editor, of First Order Literary no less, seemed almost too desperate to impress. Not to mention several copies of the literary journal littered Skywalker’s office as decoration. A stack by the door. A stack on his desk. A stack by R2’s bed. Either he had a weird obsession with the journal—there was no way, even if hell froze over, Skywalker would genuinely enjoy the recent content in the journals—or he knew a writer, possibly an editor, on staff. Which the latter option seemed unlikely; Ben informed her on the editors.

Skywalker nodded, finally handing over his copy of her manuscript, “That’s good, always use someone you trust. You don’t want anyone stealing your work.”

Rey smiled, amused by the thought. “Ah, I highly doubt Ben would do that.” She chuckled absentmindedly. She tucked her belongings back into her backpack. R2 hissed at the movement, jumping off of Rey’s lap and dashing to a corner of the tiny office.

“‘Ben’?” Skywalker repeated, pensive at the mention of the name.
So much for keeping Ben to herself.

“Uh, yeah,” Rey stood up, shrugging her backpack over her right shoulder. “My friend’s name is Ben. Brilliant guy.” She prayed to every deity in existence she wasn’t flushing bright red. For the past couple of days Rey had been unable to talk about Ben without blushing or stammering like a fool. Luckily—or maybe not so lucky; she was starting to miss the sound of his voice—Ben and Rey communicated via email and text since Monday night. Which was beginning to take its toll on her. Both were busy people, who lived in different time zones. It was no surprise there had not been a decent time to sneak in a phone call.

“I’m sorry.” Skywalker shook his head, standing up from his chair. “It’s just… my nephew’s name is Benjamin.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean to stir up—” Rey began to apologize, but halted at Skywalker’s unimpressed stare.

“It’s alright, I wasn’t prepared to hear his name. It happens every time someone mentions a ‘Ben’.” She nodded, unsure of what else to do when her professor was clearly battling familial ghosts. “I’ll email you my final draft on Friday.”

Skywalker seemed relieved by the change of subject. “Make sure you send me your first rough draft for the poetry piece on Monday.”

“That’s a quick turn around.” Rey acknowledged, trying to calculate how long it would take her to scrounge up decent work. Poetry wasn’t necessarily her forte. To be perfectly honest, she despised poetry with every fiber of her being. Trying to figure out rhyme schemes and lyrical metaphors seemed too daunting for a girl who found herself falling in love with nonfiction.

“That’s a week before midterms. Everything is a quick turn around.” He scolded lightly as he crossed to the electric kettle on top of his mini-fridge. Noticing she was still there, he waved her off. “Now leave.” He demanded. “Email me if you have questions, but I don’t want to see your face until next Wednesday.”

“Hey, Mitaka,” Ben’s mousy assistant looked up from his computer, his glasses magnifying his green eyes. A couple of years ago, Ben would have fired the anxious man on the spot, yet there was something oddly endearing about his young assistant. He reminded Ben too much of his own personality when he was first hired. Despite Mitaka’s nervous demeanor, he was the most efficient assistant Ben had and kept his loyalty to Ben rather than the journal. That was one thing Vader insisted when Ben was looking to hire a new assistant; loyalty meant everything. “I need to take an important phone call. Please screen my other calls.” The young man nodded with little question, not even flinching when Ben accidentally closed the door a little too loudly.

Leaning back against the edge of his desk, Ben dialed the number on the scrap of paper. The ink had faded, Ben mentally chastising himself for not saving the number when initially given the opportunity. He hoped he read the numbers right; he didn’t regularly call out of country numbers. Why the hell did Cassian have to move to Europe? Life was easier when his two close friends lived in the same city, not a continent away.

Cassian Andor and Ben became fast friends when they began their third year of college together. They were both transfers—Cassian from Mexico City and Ben from Ach-To, neither one accustom
to east coast living. They were both English majors in undergrad, though Cassian with his bleeding giver of a heart, decided to attend law school after graduation while Ben pursued his Masters. Still, both remained in close proximity, living down the street from one another.

Then Ben just had to introduce Jyn to Cassian.

Five years ago, Cassian married the wonderful Jyn Erso-Andor; she had to hyphenate, or else her father threatened to sign off her inheritance to their distant cousin. Ben found the situation amusing despite the glares and punches he received from Jyn. She was a British author and taught several workshops throughout Europe and the U.S. And she was a favorite of Anakin Vader’s. Whenever she submitted a piece, Anakin would fight tooth and nail to get her work published. Up until Vader’s death, Jyn submitted pieces for journal publication. It wasn’t until his passing Jyn considered to submit her work elsewhere, but simply did not have the heart to follow through. Vader understood her work and gave her opportunities when no other journal or publication house would—she was a product of his era.

While Ben was working as a proof reader for First Order, Jyn lived in the area to be an on staff writer for Vader. The two hit it off instantly during a staff meeting, both marking snide comments to each other under their breath whenever Mr. Snoke and Mr. Maul went up to present their current status.

His friends’ love was not at first glance or second, but a long winded “She’s a spoiled brat!” and “Not everyone wants to reform the world Cassian!” For a while Ben regretted introducing the two, arguing and scowling the moment they entered each other’s presense.

Then one day it all stopped—neither would say what exactly happened, and Ben was not one to pry—but they became civil. From civility, to friendship, to something more…Ben found himself as their witness to their City Hall marriage ceremony three months later.

They, of course, then decided to move to Ireland to be closer to Jyn’s ailing father…who was still kicking three years later.

“What do I owe this great pleasure?” Cassian asked, “I haven’t heard from you in months. Not since the funeral.”

Ben exhaled a ragged breath. He didn’t talk to many people since Vader’s death. “Yeah… sorry about that. Grief is a cruel creature.”

“You don’t need to tell me twice.” Cassian chuckled darkly; he lost his mother as a child, knowing the matters of life and death early on in his life.

“Um, I am calling because I need a favor.”

“Dude, you’re mi hermano. Whatever you need done, say no more.” Ben smiled at the term; Cassian was a friend he desperately wanted to call family, the man being their more than his own flesh and blood.

Ben decided to bite the bullet; he needed answers. “You were one of the last lawyers to go over Vader’s will, correct?”
“Si.”

“I need you to send me a list of everyone included in his will.” Ben knew this was questionable, but he was caught in a cage Snoke continued to downsize at every opportunity. As enticing as Bastila’s suggestion sounded, Ben knew it would be impossible and he’d face the potential of being sued if he tried to start his own journal on the side while working for the First Order Literary. When laying down his cards, Ben only had one other option. “I am going to see if anyone on that list knows the whereabouts of Vader’s grandson.”

“Why is there a giant plastic spider hanging from our ceiling?” Rey craned her neck further back, wondering how Finn was able to hang the decoration. On their lease they agreed to not damage the walls and ceiling, Rey hoping the spider was attached using command strips or tape rather than thumb tacks.

At her question, Finn popped out of the hall, a bright grin gracing his features. Walking to Rey, gauzy orange and black streamers dangles from his arm, trailing behind him like a mummy.

“For Halloween you dummy.” Finn then looked up at the spider. “Pretty cool right? I got it half off because it’s missing a leg.” Both tilted their heads to the left, finding the open space where an eighth leg should dangle.

“Huh, a spider with seven legs. How original.” She quipped sarcastically, dropping her backpack on to the floor. In the middle of the room she began to strip off her jumpsuit, leaving her in gym shorts and a ratty old tank top. With little dignity left, she plopped herself down on the floor.

“Rough day?” Finn asked as he dragged one of their dining table chairs to the wall. Rey watched as Finn juggled the streamers and tape in one hand while standing on his toes to get the highest corner of the wall.

“Yeah,” She mumbled, blinking away her exhaustion and dry eyes. She’d need to take out her contacts soon, the lens feeling like thin paper in her eye. “I went to Skywalker. Had a brief meeting with him. Like ten minutes long. Then I went to my gen ed. history course—which was awful because every time the British are mentioned, everyone looks at me like I would know the answer.” She rolled her eyes, “Then I went to work a five hour shift. Which Han and Chewie weren’t even there so it was just me and Snap.”

“Ew.” Finn commented, nose wrinkling at the mention of Rey’s co-worker. He and Snap had a very short fling, barely even a one night stand. Yet the guy still spammed Finn’s email asking for another hook up months later.

“Yup.” Rey agreed, “Then I decided to read Skywalkers comments on my paper.”

“And?”

“He’s a two face troll.” Rey groaned into her hands. For someone who claimed her writing was improving, he made snide remarks throughout her entire piece. And worst of all his note to author at the bottom:

_I want to believe your narrative, but I can’t. It is missing something I can’t put my finger on._

_Cheers,_
Skywalker

Nothing. He had absolutely nothing more to say than he didn’t believe her. Which was offensive on its own. Here she thought the old grump was lightening up around her.

“I know what will make you feel better…” Finn sang out, jumping off the chair. “Calling Beee-nnn.” He teased her.

“Shut up.” She muttered, burring her face into her folded knees. “He’s probably busy.” She shrugged nonchalantly, Finn quirking an eyebrow at her brush off.

The distinct buzz from her cell phone caught their attention. Flashing up at her from the floor, a text message awaited from *My Knight*.

“You freaking named him ‘My Knight’ in your contacts!”

“It’s an inside joke!” She cried in defense; she did not need to explain the significance of *The Scavenger and the Prince* or *The Longing You Seek* to Finn. Her dear friend would find the novels a bore, let alone understand why she and Ben referred to each other as such. “Plus it’s not like he is every going to see it.”

“Sure,” Finn backed away, smirking gleefully as Rey picked up her phone, “but when you two finally bang the living daylights out of each other and he looks through your phone—”

“When would he ever look at my phone?” Rey stuttered, trying not think of her and Ben ‘banging’ as Finn so eloquently put it.

“When you are in the shower Rey! When he is still in bed and you are in the shower! Get with the times.” He shook his head exasperatedly. Apparently she wasn’t seeing the big picture here, nor understanding the detrimental situation Finn whole heartedly believed. “Then he’ll see what you have him under.”

Rey smiled wryly at Finn, “Why does this feel like you are speaking from experience?”

Finn tensed, “Shut up and message your boyfriend.” He grumbled, dragging the chair to the other end of the wall.

“Not my boyfriend!” She denied with little malice. She chest fluttered too much to be annoyed for long.

---

*Ben*

*How’d it go today?*

*Rey*

*Not completely awful. But merely a mild victory.*

*Ben*

*I see.*

*Rey*
He’s still a dickwad, but a really sad dickwad

Ben

Sad dickwads are the worst. You want to feel sorry for them, but you can’t.
And then you want to hate them, but then you feel like you can’t.
Horrible paradox.

Rey

Exactly.

I knew you’d understand.

Ben

But other than that, everything okay?

Rey

Yes, just some pointless comments on his copy of my manuscript.

But he seems to be somewhat warming up to me.

Ben

That’s good. Sometimes all you can ask for is a little more respect.
And if he’s giving that to you, then you have won half the battle.

Rey

Thanks.

So…how about you? Anything happening on your front?

Ben

You mean all the First Order and Vader stuff?

Rey

Well, yeah!!

I mean you were all like

‘I’M GOING TO GO OFF AND BE MY OWN HOTSHOT DUDE’

Ben

First of all, I have never used the word ‘dude’ ever.
Second of all, hotshot? Seriously Rey?
Rey

Oh come on. You liked the idea of being the one in charge.

‘The Supreme Leader of the First Order’ has an interesting ring to it.

Ben

Nope. Don’t use that word.

Rey

Which word? There were twenty-six in that sentence.

Ben

‘Interesting’

Never use it.

Rey

Why? Not that I use the word often, but I’m genuinely curious about your argument.

Ben

The word ‘interesting’ is vague. If it is used, there needs to be evidence

and information on WHY exactly something is interesting.

Not to mention modern society uses it for sarcasm

(not that I don’t enjoy YOUR sarcasm) or to give an un-genuine answer.

Sorry, I’ve had this rule to not use ‘interesting’ ingrained in me from my uncle.

Rey

All valid points. I concur

Ben

‘concur’?

Someone is sounding scholarly tonight.

Rey

Maybe it’s your influence ;)

Ben

Oh really? What other words are in your vocabulary tonight?
Rey

Um.

Rey

That’s kind of all I got actually.

I’m surprised I even remembered that word with how fried my brain is.

Ben

And here I thought you were scholarly.

That my intelligence somehow rubbed off on you.

Rey

Oi, I am scholarly!

Way scholarly! I was scholarly before I even met you!

Ben

I know :)

I would not be associated with you if you weren’t.

Rey

Speaking of scholarly…my next assignment is poetry.

Please tell me you are secretly a world renowned poet along with everything else.

Rey

Because I am fucking terrible with poetry. I don’t like writing it. I don’t like reading it.

Ben

From childhods hour I have not been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from common spring;
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone;
And all lov’d—I lov’d alone.
Rey

Wow.

Rey

That’s amazing.

Rey

I think I might have shed a tear or two.

Rey

DID YOU WRITE THAT?

Ben

Me? Write that poem?

God no. Edgar Allen Poe did.

You weren’t over exaggerating when you said you don’t read poetry.

Rey

The only Edgar Allen Poe poem I know is Annabell Lee.

Because every English class in grade school loves to shove it down everyone’s throat.

Ben

It’s a beautiful poem if you ever get the chance to reread it.

Especially now that you’re older. Poems have a way of transcending time.

Layers upon layers of meaning are in a few stanzas.

It is truly a practiced skill.

Ben

Or you know there is prose poems.

Rey

I know about prose poems. I am a creative writing major Ben.

Doesn’t mean I good at writing those either.

Ben

Read ‘Letters to a Young Poet’ by Rilke

I think it might change your perspective on poetry. Maybe even on writing all together.
I know it did for me.

Rey

Fine. I’ll read it *rolls eyes*

I’m only doing this because I like you

Rey

*YOUR WRITING

I meant to send your writing.

Rey

Because you’re a splendid writer!

Ben

Oh. Thank you.

Rey

Yeah. Anyways. You never finished talking about the Vader thing.

Ben

Right. Vader.

Ben

Well, I’m going to find his grandson. I have a friend looking into it.

Rey

Ooo. The plot thickens!

Rey

But seriously, I think it’s great you’re trying to figure this out.

Especially since it is hindering your work.

Someone of you caliber deserves to enjoy their job.

Ben

I think that might have been the nice thing you ever said to me.

I going to need to screenshot this conversation.

Rey

NO! You must burn the evidence!
Ben

Opps. It’s already done.

No turning back now.

Ben

I think I’ll get it framed. It’ll fit nicely in the hall.

Rey

Soiled by my own best friend. The humanity!

Blistering mid-October winds brushed against Ben’s face as he trekked to the forgotten town house in Boston. Ever the diligent researcher, Cassian was able to cobble together a short list from his resources. Unfortunately, Vader had several names included in his will for all his odds and ends, the three names Cassian provided only a quarter of the list. He reassured Ben he’d find all the names, but he gave enough information to start his ‘familial obligation.’ At least that’s what Ben told Mitaka to classify his outings, hoping to tamper down any suspicion in the office.

Ben doubled checked the address on his phone. He did not want his nearly four hour drive to be for nothing. The rational side of his brain told him he had better chances with calling; it is what a sensible person would do. Then again, Ben was never as sensible as he projected. No matter how much he tried to deny his linage, he was still a Skywalker and a Solo. So when his eyes landed on her name, Ben knew he need to meet her in person.

He turned the corner, his eyes watching out for the four digits.

2647...2649...2651.

He stopped in front of the steps leading to a faded navy blue door. This was it. Taking a deep breath, Ben walked up the steps, telling himself this was the right decision.

He knocked once. Then twice. Then three times.

There was shuffling on the other side of the door, before it opened wide.

Ben wasn’t too sure what to expect. He had only met her once, when he had first started at First Order. She seemed old then, than she appeared now. Her triple braids gave her a girlish aura, along with her fresh face. Yet the twist of the grey and black strands of hair revealed her to be older, her bony hands worn with age; seventy-two if he recalled correctly. Vader’s former assistant didn’t attend the funeral, though sent her condolences in a letter several months later. Apparently she lived without internet and television, cutting herself as much as she could from the turbulent media.

“Hello, I’m Ben Solo. Are you Ahsoka Tano?”

“Why?” She said bluntly, clearly not in the mood for small talk. Ben didn’t blame her; retirement was meant to be practiced in peace. Not with an awkward thirty year old man knocking on her door.
“I need your help finding Vader’s grandson.”

Chapter End Notes

Ahsoka?! Cassian?! Jyn?! 
I told you everyone plays a part in this fic! 
Oh Benny boy, Vader's grandson is closer than you think. 
Did Rey and Ben kind of have a movie date? Well, maybe they did! :) And they just didn't know it.

A MAJOR connection was revealed VERY SUBTLELY in this chapter. If you think you know what it is, and don't want to spoil it for everyone in the comments, feel free to find me on Tumblr @intp-slytherin97

Comments and Kudos are always welcomed! I love discussing the fic with my readers :)
You Can't Stop Change Any More Than You Can Stop The Suns From Setting

Chapter Notes

Here you go ;)

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

I don't usually do this, but I recommend listening to Only Son by Shakey Graves, Restless by Cold War Kids, and 17 by Youth Lagoon while reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ben did not know what to expect.

He half expected Ahsoka to slam the door in his face. She did sever all ties with First Order after Vader’s passing. He also expected her to possibly turn him away, or answer his questions on her stoop.

An invitation inside for tea was not in the cards. Yet Ben sat in Ahsoka Tano’s old townhouse kitchen, the afternoon overcast dimly lighting the pale yellow room.

Quaint adequately fit Ahsoka’s home. Minimal. Detached. Spotless counters and bare walls. One would believe she barely moved into the townhouse had it not been for the carefully arrayed photos or the hand written letters on her refrigerator.

She must have been in Boston for years, even before her retirement. Which did not equate in Ben’s mind; why would a woman who worked in New York, have a townhouse in Boston?

Ahsoka Tano had been Anakin Vader’s greatest confidant and friend. She’d known the man since the beginning of his career; Vader had given her a job, one she possessed from nineteen to retirement. Without Vader, who knew where Ahsoka’s life would have turned out?

An insecure voice in Ben’s mind resented Ahsoka. Until his dying breath, Anakin sung praises of his personal assistant, ‘Snips’ as he fondly named her. A little sister Anakin never had the privilege to have. She’d always be Vader’s favorite, an unspoken fact Ben wrestled with while under the man’s influence. Ben would be second to Ahsoka—subpar.

“How do you take your tea?” Ahsoka asked as she removed the kettle from the stove, “Or are all you business types the same, drinking coffee?”

“Tea is fine.” Ben shifted in his seat, bumping his knees under the small window table. “My mother instilled tea time into my routine at a young age. I even upheld it with Vader.”

Ahsoka harrumphed.
“Two sugars,” He answered her initial question, his eyes dropping to the table top.

Silence passed between the two as Ahsoka busied herself with their tea.

When she brought his mug to him, Ben noticed the tremble in her hand. He reached to relieve her of the mug, smiling tightly.

She frowned noncommitedly back.

Her eyes latched on to him, a sense of pity blooming through her cold exterior.

“How long have you lived here?” Ben asked, growing uncomfortable in Ahsoka’s presence.

“Permanently? About four years.” She stirred her tea, Ben’s eyes focused on the swirl of the liquid. Talking to Ahsoka was easier when he didn’t make eye contact. His mother swore up and down, declaring not making assertive eye contact would end with him not achieving his goals but… something about Ahsoka caused Ben to revert to his gangly inner fourteen year old. Along the lines of respecting your elders; he was the nieve one—no the *ignorant* one—in the room. Wise eyes knew how to put Ben in his place.

“Wow.” He breathed, rattling his mind for ‘small talk’. In these moments, Ben wished Han didn’t convince Leia out of the edict lessons they considered when he was twelve. “Why—uh—why Boston?”

“Did you know Anakin’s children grew up around here?” She asked, curving her response. “Went to university here, too.” She sipped her tea once before setting the cup back down. “Anakin bought this townhouse to keep an eye on his children. Though no one really spent much time here,” She shrugged sadly, as though a memory waltzed slowly in the shadows, “Well, except for me. He had me maintain the house on the weekends.”

“Which makes sense he left the house to you in the will,” Ben concluded.

A noise of disagreement came from the back of her throat. “I wouldn’t say that. Anakin spent most of his vacations and holidays here. It’s very much his own home as it was mine…”

Ben hummed in acknowledgment; Vader invited him over for the winter holidays several times over previous years. Yet Ben declined every time. Despite matters with his family, Ben tried not to shun those he kept in contact with, such as his mother and Amilyn.

And he guessed Poe now too. Did he have to buy Amilyn’s boyfriend a Christmas gift? Ugh.

“Benjamin,” He tried not to flinch at the use of his full name. Only his mother called him ‘Benjamin’…and Rey, but she used the name jokingly. Mostly to mock him, over pronouncing on purpose. From Ahsoka, his name insinuated a burden. “How much do you know?”

“Of what?” He asked, unamused by her maneuvering answers and questions.

“Of Anakin?” She pressed, her tone crisper. “What do you know about him, outside of The First Order? Or outside of his writing?”

“I—” The words died in his throat. She caught the soft spot in his plan; he knew the basics of Vader’s life. His knowledge did not expand beyond the obvious, or what was written in a clinical biography. Single mother raised him. Married young, wife died young. Created a successful literary empire. Died; the end.
Despite his close proximity to Vader, Ben knew absolutely nothing about his mentor. He became disheartened at the realization, his view of Vader obscured by Ahsoka’s significant perspective.

“That’s what I thought,” She feared, her mouth down turning grimly.

“No one honestly knew anything.” Momentarily, his hands clenched. A deep breath, then he was fine. He was fine. “How could I have…?”

Abruptly, Ahsoka stood up from her seat, her tea cool and forgotten. “This is nonsense.” She marveled, appalled. “They told you nothing? Nothing at all?”

The knots in his stomach possessed Ben, he unable to find the fortitude to answer her imploring question. She sniffed, turning away from Ben to the hutch on the opposite wall of the tiny kitchen. Shifting and closing of drawers echoed in the room. The rummaging brought him out of his stupor, Ahsoka’s pinning gaze and imposing demeanor no longer holding him back.

“I—” His voice cracked a bit, his jitters spiking from her disgust at his ignorance. “I just want answers. Straight forward answers, none of this cryptic bullshit.” His voice firmer, his deeper register finally serving justice. He needed to improve from his first impression; his flimsy greeting and laughable attempts at small talk.

“You sound just like him.” A hallow spurt of chuckles from Ahsoka cause Ben to stumble more into confusion. He never wanted to believe the rumors of her mental state. Someone who worked for Vader long enough to retire must have had a few loose screws. Crazy, manic depressive, delusional—all of which Ben found offensive, a constant battle to damper his rage into embers at the whispers behind her back.

“Who?”

“Anakin,” Glancing over her shoulder, Ahsoka sighed. She released a thirty one year old encumbrance, “Your grandfather.”

“Hey! Rey, wait up!”

Stopping in the middle of the grassy quad, Rey turned to the sound of her name.

Running to catch up was Rose Tico—out of breath, but a sweet smile gracing her face.


Rey, not sure how to proceed, passed Rose her water bottle. “Do you—”

“Dear god, yes.” Rose snatched he bottle from Rey, gulping the refreshing water greedily. Her flush cheeks slowly faded into their natural color, the young woman’s breath steady once again. Sheepishly, she handed the water bottle back to Rey. “Here, thanks.”

“No problem,” Rey stated, a strained-hesitant smile emerging. Outside of class, Rose and Rey spoke a collective of six sentence to each other; mostly Rey ordering food at the Asian fusion restaurant. Nor did she know where she stood with the charming woman since Rey’s little (read: major) outburst in Skywalker’s workshop. Of course, there was also the Finn Factor. Was she allowed to speak to Rose? Have mindless chatter about the weather? Or did she avoid her like Ebola?

In her musings, the two women began to walk in companionable silence.
“So…how have you been?” Rose asked, peaking cautiously at Rey. “Ya, know. Since Skywalker…”

“Fine.” Rey replied briskly.

“Okay.” Rose’s eyes drooped down for a moment, lips twisting together, lost in the toils of her mind. Sharply, she cut off Rey’s path. Rey caught herself half a step, almost bumping into her classmate. Titling her head up, Rose’s bright, lively eyes locked on Rey’s. “No. Not ‘okay’.”

“Excuse me?” Rey reprieved, stepping back a foot from Rose. The shorted woman followed beat behind.

“Everyone’s worried about you,” Rose admitted, “even Boba.”

“So?” Rey beseeched, her hands latching tightly to her backpack straps. Agonizingly slow, she twisted the canvas fabric, the tautness grounding her. “It’s not like anyone gave a damn about me when I was in class.”

“Because you’re scary.” Rose defended, arms crossed. Rey’s eyebrows shot up in surprise, her next retaliation forgotten. “Well, maybe ‘scary’ is not the right word…but we were—are—horribly afraid of you.” Rose’s eye widen, her next words faster than her previous confession. “Not—not that you’re not cool, because you absolutely are, but in a ‘I-better-not-make-her-upset-sort-of-way’.”

“I’m harmless.” Rey contended, her voice faulting at Rose’s gentle, yet accusatory eyes.

“Yea, that’s not what I heard.” She confessed.

Right. Finn-Rose break still going strong.

“Finn says you kind of have a temper when provoked.” Rose remarked cautiously, watching Rey warily. Probably expecting another outburst similar to the one from workshop.

“I’m pretty sure everyone has a temper when provoked.” Rey quipped back.

“He says you get annoyed easily.” Rose rebuffed, toe to toe with Rey.

“Well, Finn can shove it,” Rey grumbled, side stepping Rose, “and I can say that because I’m his best friend.”

Rose sprang into action, cutting off Rey’s path once more. This time Rey did accidently bump into Rose, both taking a step back to put some distance between them. “All I’m saying, Rey, is you’re not an awful writer or person. We just don’t know how to talk to you.”

“Like this.” Rey frantically waved her hand in the space between them, “You can talk to me like this.”

Rose rolled her eyes good naturedly, “Are you always this sarcastic?”

“No sometimes there is a genuine person inside me.” Rey jested, a smile tugging on her lips. “But honestly, you can talk to me, and actually give me feedback. Face to face.”

“Speaking of feedback,” Rose shifted from foot to foot, “You always gave insightful critiques. Do you thing you can give me some feedback on my nonfiction piece before I submit it to Skywalker?” Rose asked bashfully, hands clasped together under her chin.
“Definitely,” Rey grinned brightly, “I’m headed to The Castle right now, if you want we can chat about it over coffee?”

“That sounds great!” Rose cheered, hand dropping back to her side. “Oh, you have missed so much. Did you know Mara and Jacen were a thing?”

“What? No way.” Rey shook her head, “I need to see the evidence.”

“Yes. Check Twitter. Mara has a huge thread…”

The two fell back into pace with each other, giggling over the melodramatic lives of their peers. Their path to coffee shop became more pleasant than either expected.

“That’s bullshit.” Ben called out to Ahsoka. “I always knew you were a little on the bizarre side, but I didn’t know you were a crack pot.”

“You must be a Skywalker with that lack of tact; insulting your host.” Ahsoka’s tired smile became a full blown grin. She wasn’t upset with Ben’s temper; instead she found his reaction humorous. She closed the drawer before her, a small shoe box in her hand.

Ben rolled his eyes at the mention of his uncle’s surname. Luke always knew when to rear his ugly head into Ben’s business.

“No one refers to me as a Skywalker.” He fiddled with the hangnail on his thumb. “Luke doesn’t even have a temper. He’s consistently a wound up ball of pent up emotions. Then he explodes, becomes depressed, and then hermits. It’s a cycle.”

“I was talking about Anakin. His real last name was Skywalker.” Ben tried his best to remain emotionless, yet the quiver of his lip cracked the ill planned façade. He examined the words, rotating her information like a puzzle piece. Ben struggled to figure out—or believe—how it all fit together soundly. “He changed his name after Padme’s death.”

“Who’s Padme?” Ben asked quietly, already sensing the answer. Fearing the answer. Ben knew tiny fractures of the story; Vader’s wife died during childbirth. The once young lover became heartbroken, and turned to his work to find solace. Middle and end, yet not a murmur of the beginning. Of the faceless wife Vader loved until his dying breath, irreplaceable in his heart and soul.

With little pomp and circumstance, Ahsoka set the box in the middle of her modest window table. Sitting back down, Ahsoka thoughtfully plucked a black and white photo from the filled box. She regarded the brown photo fondly, “Here,” she tenderly handed it to Ben.

A young couple stood together, dressed simply, but nicely. The man could not have been no older than nineteen, his hair coiffed and in place. His roguish grin hinted he did not usually present himself as refined, but quite the opposite. His tux appeared to be borrowed, a little too large at the elbows and shoulders, but he remain boyishly handsome all the same. The young woman beside him, glowed. Her long lace gown draped around her frame regally, her features as delicate as the veil adorning the crown of her head. Smile radiant, however her eyes were not focused on the camera. Instead, her gaze laid adoringly on the man beside her, as though he’s disappear if she glanced away.

A bony finger pointed to the woman in the photo, “She’s Padme. Anakin’s wife. Your grandmother.”
“She died during childbirth,” he uttered softly, frightened by the familiarities of the young couple. The tilt of Padme’s chin reminded Ben of his mother’s natural air of silent dominance. The compassion in her eyes embodied too much of Luke’s former patience. Younger Anakin bore a striking resemblance to a younger Luke, to the point Ben had to set the photo down after his initial examination.

Morbidly Ben thought not only did Padme pass away during her complicated childbirth, but the twins as well. Ironically, he was his own living breathing evidence of the assumptions inaccuracy.

“They married in secret.” Ahsoka informed him, gently setting the photo back into the box. “Padme’s family was well off, not to mention Jewish. They did not want her to marry Anakin, a farm boy raised by a single parent. He was nobody in their eyes. Nothing.”

“But he was everything to her.” Ben mused, the image of Padme’s adoration for Anakin.

“Yes,” Ahsoka laid a sympathetic hand on Ben’s forearm. “Benjamin, you need to understand… Anakin was heartbroken. He could barely take care of himself, let alone twins.” She squeezed his shoulder, continuing when he did not voice his disappointment, anger, or denial. “If it weren’t for Old Ben and I, it might have fallen far off the deep end.”

“Old Ben?” Ben inquired, the numbing of the information edging away at the familiar name.

“Benjamin W. Kenobi.” She stated proudly, “Those two were like brothers.”

“What happened?” Ben asked urgently, feeling he was pulling a loose thread in the enigma of Anakin Vader.

“Both wanted different things.” She said vaguely, clearly still disturbed by the matter after both men were buried and gone. Her eyes clouded with memories Ben was not sure he deserved to be privy to; he was a child in her eyes.

“How so?” Ben ventured.

“Anakin wanted a literary empire. Ben—well, he only wanted to tell stories.” Ahsoka picked up both their cooled teas, and crossed back to the sink to dispose of them.

“Like The Scavenger and the Lost Prince?”

“His work of labor and love.” She praised her former colleague and friend. Her eyes lit up, “I believe I have the original manuscript in Anakin’s old room. You can have it.”

Ben blanched. “No, no. I can’t—”

She shooed away his objections, “It was Anakin’s. Both he and Old Ben would want you to have it. Anakin would want you to have the world if he could.”

“Why?” Ben blinked back the pressure behind his eyes, frustrated tears begging to be freed. “Why did he never tell me?”

“Oh, Ben he tried in his own way,” She assured, voice her regret. “One man can only suffer so much heartbreak in one lifetime.”

He gulped.

“Come with me,” She beckoned, “I think there might be somethings you’ll want to take with you.”
“Do you ever sleep?” Maz asked, wiping down the front counter.

Rey peeked over her book to the tiny woman, her chin resting in her palm.

“There’s no rest for the wicked.” Rey turned the page of book, a used copy of *Letters to a Young Poet*. After some digging around on the internet, Rey found the short book available at a nearby used-bookstore. The slim copy was slightly smaller than her hand, the periwinkle cover and bright purple squiggle font gave an eighties vibe.

Maz chortled, “My child, you are far from wicked.” The tiny woman totted over, topping off Rey’s mug.

For the majority of the afternoon, Rey spent her time studying at the corner table. She are Rose discussed their pieces and their ideas for the poetry unit. Filled with eating and chatter, Rey found Rose charming and well spirited. It was no wonder Finn fell for the sweet girl. One might even say Rose was too sweet and considerate, especially when she believed to be doing the right thing for Finn by breaking up.

Rey remained silent on the matter. Finn and Rose needed to work out their own relationship, it was not Rey’s place to meddle.

No matter how much she wanted to fix the situation.

Finn and Rose’s problem not hers. Right.

After a few hours, Rose departed for her shift at work with a promise to meet up next Thursday afternoon for coffee. The thought of having plans outside of work and school delighted Rey, never one to have many friends.

Idly, Rey turned the next page, her eyes tracing over the letters leisurely. She wanted to soak up as much information and meaning she could from the book, the open page of her notebook already marked with quickly scribbled notes.

“Girl, lock up tonight.” Maz called out, throwing her apron behind the counter and coffee pot on its hotplate. “I’ve got a date with my boyfriend.” She swooned dramatically, Rey shaking her head at the older woman’s theatrics. Maz called Chewie her boyfriend, though Rey did not truly know the nature of their relationship. Chewie seemed reluctant at times, yet endearing, if the random bouquets of flowers he left every Tuesday morning were anything to go by.

“Send Chewie my love.” Maz winked at Rey as she began to head out the door, purse slung over her shoulder.

“Only if you do the same for young Benjamin.”

“How do you—” By the time Rey looked up from her book, Maz was out the door, strolling down the street with Chewie. She blinked, Maz’s playful words lulling on repeat in Rey’s mind. Leave it to Maz to know more than perceived.

Scanning the room, Rey found herself to be alone in The Castle; her average Thursday night. Her hand itched to check her phone for the umpteenth time. She already knew there weren’t any notifications Rey had taken her phone off silent mode the moment her Comparative Literature class ended.

No emails.
No messages.

No missed calls.

For the entire day, there wasn’t an inkling of Ben. Not even a little snarky comment about his work, or about someone he saw while purchasing his morning coffee.

Rey tried not to let the matter bother her. Ben was a grown man with his own life. Hell, he lived on the other side of the country. With these circumstances, it’s normal to not be in contact with someone every day.

Still, she worried.

He did not sound like himself when they last spoke. Ben sounded distant when speaking about Vader….which she found his obsession with finding his mentor’s grandson both admirable and well, concerning. Her hopeful attitude deeply contrasted with the apprehension she felt whenever Vader was brought into the conversation. As a scholar and writer, she found Vader’s work distinguished and rapturous. Once she began a Vader novel, she was unable to put it down until she finished or fell asleep from exhaustion.

His personality on the other hand…

Rey knew she shouldn’t believe tabloids and gossip, yet some of the tales of Vader were harrowing. Temper, reclusive, scathing critic. Several times she found it hard to believe Ben spoke highly of the man. Or how Ben worked for him; referred to Vader as generous, kind hearted, brimming with wisdom.

Yet… maybe Vader simply received a bad reputation due to his status. An editor-in-chief in one of the most prolific literary journals of the contemporary age.

After all, Rey believed Skywalker to be nurturing, brilliant in the classroom and in his writing. However, he was decidedly not.

With a dejected huff, Rey flipped her phone over on the table top, screen down. She focused on the Rilke’s words once more…

“…And that is why it is so important to be solitary and attentive when one is sad: because the seemingly uneventful and motionless moment when our future steps into us is so much closer to life than that other loud and accidental point of time when it happens to us as if from outside…”

The boxes of Vader’s journals and few remaining personal belongings sat in Ben’s passanger seat.

Ahsoka had been kind enough to leave Ben to search through Vader’s room…which did not have as many personal belongings as Ben had hoped. A life accumulated into two boxes. All of Vader’s material possessions had been distributed out to those mentioned in the will or their next of kin.

Mostly barren, Vader’s old bedroom did not leave much of an impression of the man. Clean and crisp. Clinical linens, a layer of dust from the year of absence. Snooping lightly, Ben easily found the boxes of journal tucked into the pine armoire. Worn leather and sloppy cursive, crudely taped and stapled notes in the pages. Unorganized, haphazard, and chaotic—Ben afraid to touch, to feel the truth in his palm.

He picked up the boxes, and stashed the memorabilia in his car.
He stumbled a bit when Ahsoka pulled him into a bone crushing hug, she stronger than she appeared. A promise to return for a visit left his lips without permission, Ben realizing how desperately they both needed closure before regret could scold his actions.

He did not notice the wedding photo shoved into his coat pocket until he was almost out of Massachusetts.

Which was how he found himself parked outside the nearest Starbucks at ten-thirty in the evening, the photo now safely tucked into the top box. The wedding photo…his grandparents wedding photo. Anakin’s wedding photo.

No matter how many times he tried, the name ‘Anakin Vader’ and the term ‘grandfather’ did not quite connect in Ben’s mind. His brain short circuited whenever he lingered on the thought too long.

Shakily, Ben reached into the top box. His hand found a thinner journal amongst the bursting companions. The simple book was clasped together by a twisted lock, Ben turning the knob with his right thumb. He flicked to a random page.

November 23rd 2016

Today was Benjamin’s birthday…

He snapped the journal shut.

Anakin…Vader…his grandfather wrote about him—Ben. Wrote about his birthday; his thirtieth birthday. Ben recalled the day to be mundane; work, some writing, a meeting possibly…Han sent him a birthday card. Ben threw it away without opening the envelope. He had lunch with his mother. Vader sent him a signed copy of The Longing You Seek, joking about how it would be worth something one day.

Ben stuck the copy on the shelf in his apartment. He didn’t know if it was still there.

In his own personal journals, Vader wrote about Ben as though his existence were some significant event. As though he mattered…

Maybe he did matter to the old man? Then, why the hell did Vader not say anything?

Sure, heartbreak, as Ahsoka insisted may have been the cause…yet…

A strangled cried rattled from the back of Ben’s throat. He screeched again, his arms thrashing against steering wheel. He thumped until his arms grew sore, the horn honking sporadically with each vicious throw. The car horn echoed an apologetic symphony to the empty parking lot. Growls tore through his lungs, all the pent up confusion from the afternoon combusting in the privacy of his own vehicle. Hot tears cascaded freely, while thoughts bungled together, then out.

Why did he never say anything?

Why didn’t Luke say anything?

Why didn’t his parents say anything?

Why the fuck was this kept from him? Who the fuck decided that?

In the middle of his internal rant, the journal dropped from his hand, tumbling to the carpeted floor.
He hiccupped, snot and tears unforgivably decorating his face. With his sleeve, Ben poorly wiped away his mess of a face. Despite his efforts, his eyes were red and puffy, more salty tears eating their way to the surface. He needed to stop crying. He didn’t know how to stop crying. Everything Amilyn taught him flew out of his mind. Fuck, did Amilyn know? No, she couldn’t have. She’d never be able to keep it to herself.

He needed to do something. He needed to find someone before he did something he’d regret. Like break his car window. Or break the Starbucks window. Or fucking jump off a cliff. Not that there were any cliffs around, but if he were desperate enough, he’d find one.

Blindly, Ben reached into his coat pocket. His clammy hands struggled to swipe open his phone, his screen unlocked after the fifth try. Gulping for any air his lungs could receive, Ben tapped through his recent contacts.

His thumb hovered over Amilyn’s number.

She’d know how to calm him down. She’d list all the things he’d need to rest. She wouldn’t pry until he was ready.

Ben didn’t think he’d ever be ready.

He needed prying, he needed someone to yell at him, tell him to calm the fuck down. To listen to him cry, even if he was embarrassed. For someone to not whisper a word of anything to anyone.

He swiped past her, clicking on the name underneath.

Rey would like to say she did not drop everything when her phone buzzed. She did not fling her book down across the table in panic. Or, stare helplessly at her phone for a solid minute before she regained enough common sense to pick up her phone.

Though, she did in fact yelp in shock when she saw it was a video phone call.

They never video called before, or Skyped. Only silly pictures and phone calls. This was uncharted territory…what if he didn’t like how everything matched up voice and body wise. Rey shook her head. She was being stupid—like Ben actually cared about trivial matters. He valued intellect…but he was also a man.

Taking a deep breathe, Rey sat up taller and fluffed up her hair a bit. She then swiped to accept the call.

On the screen she only saw half of Ben’s face, mostly his hair. The camera’s odd angle forced Rey to squint, and shaky hold of the phone made it difficult to figure what was going on. Did he accidentally call her? Wherever he was, it was dark out, shadows of light dancing on the car window. She heard soft breathing, as though his heart was calming down after a sprint.

“Ben?” She asked apprehensively, “Ben, I can’t see you.”

“Huh?” The phone tilted forwards then backwards, before his face came in full view. Tired brown eyes shined to her, Ben biting his lips together. “Sorry,” His voice cracked, “I’ve never used the video call feature before.”

She pursed her lips, her eyes focused on the blotchiness of his face. “Me too, I kind of forgot it
existed.” Her jaw set, “Uh, Ben…are you alright? I mean I know that’s kind of forward, but…” She did not know where else to go, what to ask. She’d been startled by the openess of his expressions. She knew pain, but seeing his face twisted in emotion brought a hallow ache to her chest.

“No,” He swallowed, his Adam’s apple bobbing. His dark hair fell over his right eye. “No I’m not alright. In fact, I feel like throwing up.”

“Then throw up.” Rey shot back firmly.

Ben snorted, fresh tears released by the movement. “Thanks for those wise words of wisdom.”

“‘Wise words of wisdom’ is a redundant phrase.” She remarked, another snort reverberating through Ben. “Though, I’d let it slide since it can be considered a compliment.”

A phantom smile faded through Ben, but was gone in a blink of an eye. She nearly missed it; she’s relieved she didn’t.

He licked his lips, a halfhearted exhale left him. “I…Today I found out Vader—” A series of emotions pulled and fought for reign over his features; fear, disbelief, wonder, and finally grief, “—Vader was my grandfather.” He chuckled darkly, sniffing between his sardonic musings. “He was my grandfather. Shit, that’s the first time I’ve ever said it out loud.”

“Ben,” She murmured, unable to find the appropriate words to comfort him. She wasn’t the friend people ran to when they were hurt, or needed a shoulder to cry on. Rey learned about honest friendships in college—about twelve years later than the rest of the world’s population. But she knew Ben…and Ben loved to argue, Ben loved to see the real side of issues. Ben listened and then brought his brilliance to the surface. She needed to push a few buttons to get him back…“That’s…fucked up. I mean you worked with him. For years.”

“I fucking know that.” He ran his free hand through his hair, his hostility directed to the floor rather than the camera. Protecting her from his anger. “No one bothered to say anything. I fucking thirty-one years old, and I had to find out from Vader’s former assistant… I mean, I get why my parents…” He sighed, wiping his face with his sleeve. “They…they never knew how to talk to me. Treat me. I was their kid who had anger issues and didn’t know how to control his emotions. I’m a fucking basket case.”

“Stop that.” She gritted, Ben flinching at her tone. Her jaw locked; maybe she shouldn’t have used agressive tone, but she caught his attention. “You’re not a basket case, a horrid monster sometimes, but not a basket case.” Biting her upper lip, she tried her best to make eye contact with him through the screen. “Yes, it’s a shitty move. Your parents can be shitty. We’ve established that a month ago…but just because they’re shitty doesn’t mean you are.”

He stared at her, awestruck.

Dear, god. Did she offend him?

Rey cleared her throat, heat pooling in her gut the longer he stared at her like that. He honestly needed to stop, or else she’d word vomit her feelings. She did not need to crash his serious talk with her unrequited heart eyes.

“Uh…wow.” Ben inhaled deeply, “Thank you…Rey.”

“Any time,” She answered, her free hand trembling against her thigh. She sat on her hand to stop its quaking, hoping Ben didn’t notice her shifting too much to comment. “You mentioned your
parents, what about your uncle?” Ben’s eyes widen at her question. “Do you think he would have said anything, or maybe something was holding him back?”

“Skywalker? God, no.” Ben grumbled, a new sense of fury alighting his eyes. “That guy would keep his lips shut for eternity if it meant he never had to speak to me again.”

Rey blinked dumbly.

What the fuck?

She heard ‘Skywalker’, which made no sense. How would Ben know Skywalker? It’d be impossible, unless…no. No way. “Did you…did you say ‘Skywalker’?” Rey laughed nervously, biting her bottom lip to shut herself up.

Ben frowned at her, puzzled by her question. “Yeah, Luke Skywalker is my uncle. I thought you knew that.”

Rey’s eyes widen. Well, fuck no, she didn’t.

Luke Skywalker. Her professor Luke Skywalker was Ben’s—her Ben’s—uncle. She’d been agonizing over this prof’s ridiculousness to his own nephew!

Then that meant… Her Ben was the nephew. THE NEPHEW.


But then that meant, Luke Skywalker was also the fucked up uncle! Her Ben’s fucked up uncle.

Skywalker’s Ben and her Ben were the same Ben.

“Uh yeah,” Rey shook her head, shrugging, as though to say ‘of course’. Her hand flew up to hair, twirling a lose piece by her ear. “I knew that…I just had a brain fart.” She finished awkwardly, hoping her existential crisis did not display of her face for Ben to see. He’d definitely question her because he was the thoughtful type. He’d put her own crisis before his. Gentlemanly in such a cruel way; god, she adored it.

Her worries were for naught, Ben’s gaze focused on something in the passanger seat.

“I…I have a long drive back.” Ben lifted his gaze back to her, not as broken as he had been when he first called. “Do you think you can stay on the line with me? You don’t have to talk or anything. I have some of his stuff and I’m afraid…” His voice dropped off, his dark pretty eyes pleading earnestly to her.

“Of course.” Rey smiled softly for him, feeling her panic ebb away. Fear and longing became nonexistent when she was with him. Even if it was through a phone screen. “However long you need. I’ll be here.”

“…the quieter we are, the more patient and open we are in our sadnesses, the more deeply and serenely the new presense can enter us, and the more we can make it our own, the more it becomes fate, and later on, when it ‘happens’ (that is, steps forth out of us to other people), we will feel related and close to it in our innermost being…”
BEN KNOWS HE'S VADER'S GRANDSON.
Did you guys think I'd keep it from him longer? Nope, Vader is major to Ben's character construct. He needed to know.

BONUS: REY KNOWS SKYWALKER IS BEN'S UNCLE. She was always going to be the first to know friends.

Also, the last quote is from Rilke-- I highly recommend 'Letters to a Young Poet' by Rainer Maria Rilke for everyone, but especially for any creatives. Life changing brilliance in those letters.

Comments and Kudos are always appreciated! Let me know what you think! I love discussing the fic with my readers!

Follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
Rebellions Are Built on Hope

Chapter Summary

Rey, Ben, and their dogs

Chapter Notes

Here is the next chapter!

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I mean I should tell him, right?” Rey asked. She laid on her bed, her head hanging off the edge as she contemplated her recent news. Ben and Anakin Vader being related was mind-blowing, but realizing the man she called a dear friend was in fact Skywalker’s nephew… Rey felt like vomiting.

Not vomiting because the scary, troubled nephew was indeed Ben—her Ben, but because the neglectful, borderline verbally abusive uncle was Dr. Skywalker. A man who seemed callously broken and emotionally frail. Yet there was a lingering harshness in his eyes, enough to warn other’s he was capable of much more than what his appearance offered.

“He’d do that for me. Ben would tell me immediately…at least I hope he would.” She huffed, slowly feeling the blood run to her head. “But…what if he reacts badly?” She rolled her eyes. “I’m stupid. It’s Ben; of course he’d react badly.” Though it did not show up much, Ben did have a temper. From the moment they began interacting, Ben had been transparent. He had issues, he was doing better, and he does not have time nor energy to deal with shit. Especially shit involving his family. His essay made the message loud and clear; everyone except his mother were essentially dead to him, and he had zero desire to speak to anyone.

The orphan in Rey wanted to tell Ben shunning his family was not the answer… yet the evidence piled high. Not to mention, his life was nearly put in jeopardy when he was with Skywalker.

Maybe telling him about Skywalker was not the best option…

“…then again he can be level headed when he wants to be.” Would he even consider being level headed in this type of situation? No. No he would not.

An irrational side of Rey feared Ben would sever all ties with her if he discovered her connection to Dr. Skywalker. He’d block her, delete her information, and cease all contact.

She’d be alone again.
Sure, she had Finn and possibly Rose but…it wasn’t the same. She lov—she really liked Ben. In a sort of romantic-butterflies and electric heat sort of way. Not a ‘let’s high five’ sort of way. With Ben she felt less out of place; she felt like she was beginning to understand where she belonged.

She couldn’t tell Ben. For his sake, and selfishly, for hers.

But that didn’t mean she was meant to sit idly with this information.

“Skywalker hurt Ben,” Rey turned over on to her stomach, the blood rushing back down. “But it seems like he feels guilty…and knowing Ben he is not necessarily an innocent party.” They seemed to be having two contradicting sides of their story. It is often said there are two sides to every story, and then the truth… She sat up suddenly struck by the idea. “I need to get both sides of the story! I need to understand both Skywalker and Ben’s point of view—because—because maybe it might just be a huge misunderstanding!” Those two men seemed to struggle to communicate, maybe if she did some of her probing and investigating then the nephew and uncle might be able to reconnect…or at least clear the air and get some closure. “Then I shouldn’t tell neither Skywalker nor Ben until I have everything in place!” Rey sighed happily, falling back on her bed. She turned her head, to BB who sat attentively by her pillow. “Thank you for listening to me little buddy, you’re the best.”

Her dog barked and licked her face in response.

“I’m glad it was just you at the house,” Ben murmured to his dog, Trixie, as they strolled through the park. “I don’t think I’d been ready to talk to mom about everything yet.” He admitted, Trixie blinking up at him with her dark brown eyes.

In a burst of simmering anger and foolish confidence, Ben went to his mother’s house. On his way he rehearsed every possible argument and deflection his mother would throw back at him; he needed to win her over. He needed to bend her own words against her because Leia was a pro at flying by the seat of her pants and owning it.

Though, of course, all his limited bravado vanished the moment he parked his car in Leia’s driveway. She lived outside the city in the suburbs area; close, but not too close. A compromise he needed to endure. Taking several deep breaths, Ben stocked up to the front door and knocked. And knocked. And knocked.

And…then he decided to be wise and use his copy of her house keys. To his astonishment, she was not home. Usually, Leia was home on the weekends, working on some project, whether it be crafts or her gardening, she could be found in her humble abode.

She left a note on the refrigerator for Ben:

*Going off for a holiday this weekend. Go out and do something instead of spending time with your old hag ;)*

- *Mom*

Leia gone for the weekend was both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because Ben was sure he’d word vomit and cry when he brought up the Vader situation. Curse because he now had to sit longer with this information eating away at him. At least he told Rey; if he didn’t tell anyone, he’d surely go insane.
Rey was understanding Thursday night, staying on the line well into the early hours of the morning. For most of the time she tried to distract him, telling him about her day and some of her plans for the weekend. Mostly work for her, her boss needing extra hands around the autoshop since he’d be taking the Saturday off. She showed him a sleeping BB, the dog scruffy, but undeniably gentle. Through her shaky camera he saw quaint streets and heard the nostalgic crashes of lazy waves. She lived in a coastal town…somehow the little fact warmed his heart. For a moment, Ben’s thoughts lingered on Ahch-To, despite the town being a ghost of his past, he loved it there. Hazy skies, thick fog, and welcoming breezes…he’d love to go back. Ahch-To was the only place to ever feel like home to Ben; he knew Rey would love it too.

Somewhere around three in the morning, for Ben, Rey fell asleep talking to him. Her head was propped up by pillows and tiny pool of drool dripped from her mouth. She was oddly endearing when in slumber, Ben ending the call as he felt his chest constrict with longing.

She did not see him like that. Rey was just a sweet yet stubborn girl, who forced friendship on to him. He might not ever see her in person, let alone…Ben shook his head.

Trixie barked up at him, “You want to rest, girl?” She tilted her head, her folded ears flopping to the side. “Sure, let’s sit on that bench.” Ben coaxed Trixie to follow with a light tug on her leash, the miniature schnauzer trotting along beside him to the bench a few paces away. A few joggers passed by, waving to Trixie, she yipping happily to them.

Ben rolled his eyes. For some reason everyone loved Trixie, even strangers. Though she’d never let anyone get too close to Ben, the dog fiercely protective of her owner. Reaching the bench, Ben sat down. Trixie jumped on to the open space beside him, laying her head on his thigh. Oh, she knew somewhere in her empathetic dog psyche, Ben needed comforting. Gently, Ben stroked Trixie’s dark brown coat.

“Do…do you think mom kept this from me for a reason?” Ben asked Trixie, looking out into the park. For an early Saturday morning, few families were out, except for one or two. Ben watched as a little dark haired toddler giddily stumbled across the playground, his father ‘chasing’ after him. The kid was caught in a few seconds, the two erupting into giggles. “I mean…she does everything for a reason. She’s Leia Organa, always with a plan…but there needs to be a reason. She isn’t cruel…at least she’s never been cruel to me.” He mused, scratching Trixie behind her left ear. The mom of the toddler came on to the scene, holding out her hand to him. Together the little family strolled out of the playground on to the park’s trail, the boy smiling happily as he was swung between his parents.

Ben swallowed, inhaling deeply.

“I’m afraid to ask—”

“Hey, I didn’t know you owned a dog!”

Ben’s head shot up.

A couple of feet away stood Poe Dameron, decked in workout gear. God, and just when Ben thought he’d be alone…

“What’s up Solo?” Poe asked slightly out of breath, taking a seat on the furthest edge of the bench.

“Oh, nothing much. Just walking my dog.” Ben clipped, his grip tightening on Trixie’s collar. Ben did not hate Dameron, but he did not necessarily like the hot shot. Amilyn introduced the two not long after admitting to being in a relationship with a younger man. It was at brunch with his mother
and couple of other close ‘friends’, or as Ben liked to call ‘people he had to associate with because they knew him since diapers’. Such as Mr. Threepie, who drove him insane, yet Ben endued brunch with him every first Sunday of the month. For the sake of his mother…

“What’s his name?” Poe held his hand out to Trixie, allowing her to sniff his palm.

“Her name is Trixie.” Ben replied tersely. He tried not to get offended when someone mistaken Trixie for a male, many people did with her breed, yet with Poe he could not help it.

“Oh, what’s Trixie short for?” Poe chuckled as Trixie licked his fingers and nuzzled the meat of his hand.

“For Beatrice.” He noticed Poe’s confused look; okay, sure— many people did not name their dogs Beatrice, but Ben wasn’t going to name his dog something stupid like… Cupcake or Fluffy. Not that Trixie looked like a Cupcake or Fluffy, her dark coat and nicely groomed hair did not support either names. “I wanted to pick a literary name. It was either Elizabeth or Beatrice.”

“So Elizabeth from Pride and Prejudice or Beatrice from Much Ado About Nothing?” Poe guessed, Trixie already ditching her owner to curl up with her new friend.

Ben blinked surprised by Poe’s observation. He never expected the jock like engineer Poe Dameron to know classical literary characters. “Um, the first one’s right, but I meant Beatrice from Dante’s Inferno. She was the reason Dante journeys through hell and redeems his soul.”

“Ah,” Poe nodded in understanding, “Dante’s Inferno would have been my second guess. I had a friend in college who loved the book. Would not stop raving about Dante and Beatrice. She loved a good redemption story.” Poe shrugged with a wistful smile.

“Well it’s technically an epic.” Ben corrected, the tension he felt around Poe melting. Maybe Dameron wasn’t such a dimwit after all.

“You sound just like Rey.” Poe chuckled, unaware of the stillness of Ben’s heartbeat at the mention of his friend’s name. “She’d always correct me on literary facts, kind of a know-it-all, but a great kid.”

“Did you just say ‘Rey’?” Ben asked, believing he heard wrong. There was no way Poe knew his Rey. His Rey was currently in college, while Dameron probably attended university ten odd years ago.

“Uh, yeah,” Poe answer nonchalantly, more consumed with Trixie’s playful barking and panting. “Her name is Rey Kenobi…or Rachel Jacobs? I get confused because she changed it during her freshman year. I highly doubt you know her, she’s like twenty-two. Didn’t go to Ahch-To U the same time as you.”

Ahch-To U? Ben attended Ahch-To U for about three years before transferring to NYU. “How do you know I went to Ahch-To U?” He asked Poe.

“Your mom told me, I’m an alumni. Graduated 2016.” He answered breezily, standing up from the bench.

“Does…does this Rey…what’s her Hogwarts house?” Was that seriously all Ben could remember about Rey right now? From all their conversations, late night calls and emails, the only information he could pick out that someone else might know was her Hogwarts House.

Dear god help him.
Confused by the question, Poe frowned, but answered all the same. “Slytherin. Very hardcore Slytherin. She even hisses at people for fun…” He shook his head, as though remembering Rey hissing at him in jest. Like she had done to Ben via text. “Now that I think about it. You two would get along very well.” Ben’s eyes widen, unable to help the uncomfortable swirl in his gut. Poe glanced down at his sports watch, wincing. “I need to get going, but you should come over for dinner sometime this week. Lyn and I would love to have you over.”

Poe called Amilyn ‘Lyn’? Seriously?

“Uh, sure.” Ben stuttered out, dumbfounded by Poe’s invitation and trying to comprehend how Poe exactly knew Rey. His Rey.

“Cool! I’ll text you details!” Amilyn’s boyfriend shouted over his shoulder, already going back to his jog. Trixie barked happily back, Ben holding her down from running after Dameron.

Ben turned to Trixie. “What the hell just happened?”

Trixie tilted her head and barked.

“You don’t know either? Nice.” Ben ruffled her hair.

---

*Ben*

*Do you know a Poe Dameron?*

*Rey*

*Why?*

*Ben*

*Because he is the guy who is dating my godmother/therapist.*

*Rey*

*WHAT? AMILYN IS YOUR GODMOTHER/ THERAPIST?*

*Ben*

*How the fuck do you know Amilyn?*

*Rey*

*How the fuck do you know Poe?*

*Ben*

*I already told you how I know Poe!*

*Plus I asked first!*
Well Poe came back into town like a month ago to talk to Finn.

Ben

Wait a minute. Poe from crappy first story Poe
is the Poe who was with Finn who is now
the Poe who is with Amilyn.

Rey

There were a lot of Poes in that sentence.

But I think the answer is yes.

Rey

And I thought we agreed to forget
about that heinous rough draft!

Ben

Shit.

Ben

I know more about this Poe than I’d like to know.

Rey

How did you know Poe knew me?

Or to even ask me about Dameron?

Ben

You came up in the conversation.

Rey

What? How?

Ben

I don’t know, he just brought up this Rey he knew.

Ben

We were talking about my dog’s name.

I was taking her for a walk.

Rey
YOU GOT TO SEE YOUR DOG?

Send me a picture later.

Rey

Wait, but why would I come up in that conversation?

Ben

Because my dog’s name is Trixie,
after Beatrice from Dante’s Inferno.
And you are such a MASSIVE literary nerd
you leave an impression.

Rey

You named your dog after Beatrice?

I fucking love that!

Ben

Okay, I promise we can nerd out about Dante’s Inferno later.
I just need to clarify—Same Poe?

Rey

Same Poe.

Rey

Also I’m free after 5 today.

Which would be 8 for you.

Do you want to videocall? Let BB and Trixie meet?

PLLLLLLEEEAAASSEEE?

Ben

Of course.

“Hey kid!” Han greeted Rey as he walked by her station. The shop had been mostly slow for a Saturday, the misty fall weather detracting tourists and locals. Many preferred to be bundled up at home on the weekend, downtown and the beach only appealing when the sun decided to peak out for the midday hours.
“What are you doing here? I thought you were out?” She asked, dropping her copy of Shakespeare’s Sonnets on to her work bench beside her chair.

“Technically I am.” Han called back from his office. From outside the office windows, Rey saw him riffling through his belongings, eventually popping back out with his leather jacket. “Forgot my jacket here last night. My wife wants to take a walk around town.”

“Wife?” Rey cocked her head to the side. She recalled Han being divorced, and did not hear any mentions of a wedding or marriage recently.

Han stopped, chuckling at her confusion. “Well, ex-wife for formalities sake. Still love her as much as the day I met her.” He shook his head good-naturedly, shrugging on his jacket. “I need to go kid before—”

“Han Solo! I swear if you are trying to fix something right now—” A new voice called out from the front of the garage. Turning the corner from behind the busted Old Falcon Han tinkered with during down time, was a rather short, commanding woman. Her hair was piled on her head in a twisted braid-bun, streaks of brown and grey mingling. She reminded Rey of an army general, yet a tender teacher. An odd mix, but an inexplicable draw. It was difficult not to give attention to her.

“Leia, I told you I’d be a minute.” Han grumbled to the woman.

“Well, for you a minute can be an hour, and in an hour it will without a doubt rain down the harbor.” She pursed her lips in displeasure before catching sight of Rey out of the corner of her eye. “Hello sweetheart,” She smiled, “I’m Leia, Han’s wife.” She held her hand out for Rey to shake.

“Oh,” Rey smiled back, standing up to take the older woman’s hand. She was glad there were few customers and her hands didn’t have oil stains. “I’m Rey Kenobi.”

Leia’s smile twitched, though her eyes suddenly grew softer, into a familiar welcoming brown. “It’s very nice to meet you Rey.”

“You as well.” She remarked, letting go of Leia’s hand.

“Well, now that we all know each other, let’s go princess.” Han commented, he and Leia heading for front of the garage.

As Han and his apparent not-wife left, Rey tried to ignore how Leia’s brown eyes seemed to be filled with knowing, and dare she say, somber hope.

“I think our dogs are in love with each other,” Rey chuckled as BB continued to sniff the image of Trixie through the laptop. She scratched the top of BB’s head, her dog happily closing his eyes in bliss.

“I don’t know. I think Trixie finds BB annoying.” Ben argued, shifting Trixie to the side, rather than on his lap. The dog continued to jump in front of the laptop’s camera, Ben shifting his head side to side to be in the shot. Whenever he moved the laptop Rey was able to see more of the room, the guest bedroom Ben used at his mother’s house far brighter than his apartment. Ben was staying at his mother’s house while she was away for the weekend, to care for her plants and to spend some quality time with Trixie.

“Just because I have a mutt and you a purebred, does not mean Trixie is better than BB.” Rey
reminded Ben as she picked up another spring roll from her to-go plate. She chewed on her food, watching Ben shoo away a rowdy Trixie. His dog jumped away, scurrying to the other side of the sofa. “She is adorable though.”

Ben shrugged, his arm reached out to patting his dog off screen. “Eh, she’s alright.” His grin said otherwise, his eyes full of adoration for his dog. She’s never heard or seen him so happy than when he was with Trixie. “In other news,” He turned back to face Rey, “Did you turn in your final draft for nonfiction?” He reached for something out of her sight, his shirt rising. Briefly, Rey caught sight of his well sculpted abs, a panicked yelp escaping her.

Shit, of course he’d be ripped too, that fucking arsehole.

“Yes, sir.” Rey saluted, trying to hide her astonished squeak. Ben came back into view, a bowl of Cesare salad in his hand. “And I’m already working on poetry.”

“Good,” Ben nodded, “Any ideas what you will write about?” He asked before taking a forkful of food in his mouth. She tried not to stare at his mouth too long…it made her mind wander to not so savory territory.

“No.” Rey grumbled, stuffing another spring roll into her mouth. “Everyone writes,” She swallowed, trying not to talk too much with her mouth full. “Everyone writes about love and family… and I’m just like ‘hello, I have limited experience in both, boo’.”

Ben smirked, amused. “Not all poetry is about love, or family. I think you are pigeon holing the genre too much.” He sifted through his salad, stabbing a bunch of croutons together. “I thought you read Rilke.”

“I did. And I read over two dozen Shakespeare sonnets this afternoon, and it was seriously all I got.” She replied miserably, poking at her mushroom pork despondently.

“Pick your favorite sonnet.” He told her, eating his crouton kabob. “We’re going to do an exercise.”

“Fine,” She muttered, reaching over the screen to grab her book of sonnets at the edge of her bed. She heard loud coughing from Ben, she immediately sitting back down with the book. “Are you okay?” She asked, concerned for his sudden coughing fit.

His face was red, his Adam’s apple bobbing, “Yup,” He exhaled deeply, “Just food going down the wrong pipe is….all.” He finished lamely, Rey not entirely convinced about his wellbeing, but moving on with their conversation.

“I guess I like Sonnet 55,” She answered unsure.

“Sure,” Ben shrugged, “It’s the ‘Not Marble, nor Gilded Monuments’ one right?”

“How to hell do you know these off the top of your head?” Rey huffed, bending the binding of the book to stay open on the page.

“I like Shakespeare.” Ben stated as though it were the most obvious answer. “Anyways, tell me in your own words why you like it.”

“How will this help?” Rey asked, shifting on her bed to get more comfortable.

“You need to understand poetry before you try to write it. Why not start with the greatest poet.” Ben waited paitently for her to begin, setting his food down, giving Rey his undivided attention.
“Well…I like that the poem refers to time as a slut.” She grinned, holding the book closer to her face.

“That’s a start.” Ben encouraged, his brown eyes softening the slightest. “Come on, I know you can do it. It’s just me you’re talking to.”

Nervousness and pressure faded away at his words, Rey far more relaxed than she’s been moments ago. “It’s a sonnet about immortality…its also about…about praise?” She trailed off rereading the middle of the sonnet again. “Enduring praise, I guess, for someone who is lost… but will find their way through because they are stronger than they believe. Stronger than any written words or even the greatest gods….which brings us back to immortality. They are everlasting in their lover’s eyes. Its longing, praise, and…wistful. Almost as though there is this distance in the diction.” She blinked, lifting her gaze back to Ben who seemed lost in his own thoughts. His eyes were pensive, as though he were not only staring at her but right through her. “Ben?”

“I…” He licked his lips, “I never thought of it that way. I just figured it was about impending fate and immortality…but never quite about a distant lover.” His voice broke a little at the word ‘distant’. “But, it does feel as though there is some type of distance between the speaker and the subject.” Silence fell between the two, neither sure of how to voice the brewing tension between them that the poem somehow stirred.

Out of Rey’s sight, Trixie barked.

“Um…I think I need to take Trixie out to use the restroom.” Ben announced, clearing his throat. He quickly excused himself, calling out for Trixie to follow.

Rey…was relieved Trixie barked because she might have bared her soul to Ben in an instant. Seeing him even the slightest bit vulnerable caused Rey to want to spill out her feelings to him. Tell him her fears and her dreams, tell him everything she felt about him, to tell him about everything else… she felt safe.

She also felt the incredible distance. The longing to be closer to him, to perform the simplest act of affection and hold hands.

She felt silly. She felt lost. She felt alone. She felt the sonnet in her bones the longer she dwelled on the rhyme and diction.

“Hey—” Ben began, pausing at the sight of her tears. “Are you okay? I was only gone for two minutes what happened?” He asked softly, his own eyes watering at the sight of her silent tears.

She swallowed. “The…poem is…beautiful.” She shrugged helplessly, unable to say anything else.

“Yeah…yeah it is.” He said with a weak, understanding smile, his words of agreement not for the sonnet.

Chapter End Notes

Soooo…this was an important chapter, but kind of a filler. And you’ll get the title of the chapter (which all of them are Star Wars quotes) in a couple of chapters ;)

Did you guys catch where I got the name Trixie from?
Also Shakespeare Sonnet 55 is one of the most argued and critically acclaimed sonnets. People get so many different meanings from it and I felt something about an immortal lover or immortal love felt best for Reylo. Especially since time is a major theme in the sonnet, there is this sense of wistfulness and distance in the tone of the piece. And Rey is kind of projecting here, but who hasn't projected when they've read a poem that speaks to them.

Comments and kudos are always appreciated! I love discussing the fic with my readers!

Follow me on tumblr: @intp-slytherin97
Women Always Figure Out the Truth. Always

Chapter Summary

Long distance is rough. Especially when you get ghosted.

Chapter Notes

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ben

Blue or Red?

Rey

Why?

Ben

Just answer: Blue or Red?

Rey

Fine.

Red.

Rey

Ben?

Hello?

Rey

Did you seriously just ask a question to leave me hanging?

Rey

BEeeeunnNnNn.

Ben
“What?” Ben’s clutch on his cell phone tightened.

“I’m not coming back for a couple of weeks.” Leia repeated. “It’s an extended vacation.” She said breezily, as though the decision were simple. In reality, without Ben’s own dilemmas, there wouldn’t be a problem with Leia gone for an extended period of time. Being the dutiful son he was, Ben would stay at his mother’s while she was gone. Water her plants, spend more time with Trixie—being outside of the city every once in a while did him well. Honestly, if he had the choice he’d choose the quiet, small town life.

“How can it be a vacation when you are retired?” Ben gritted, hunching over his coffee at the dining table. Thoughtfully, he picked up the note she left. “And by the way, who leaves notes anymore? You could have just called me. Or text. Like a normal person.”

“Notes are a dying art form, and you know I can barely tap those keys on that stupid phone you insisted I buy. Some of us like to be off the grid, Ben.” Leia defended.

“Alright,” Ben sighed, rubbing the remaining sleep from his eyes. It was too early to handle his mother’s jabs and bemoans. “But a couple of weeks? I—I have an important matter to discuss with you.” He stressed. He could not confront his mother about the Vader situation over the phone. For most of his life, Ben was perpetually tactless when concerning his family… but he knew he needed to speak to his mother face to face. Yet, here she was, in true Leia Organa stubbornness, making his agenda to clear the air nearly impossible.

“Ben, if it is so important, why can’t you tell me over the phone?” Leia implored.

“Because…” Ben floundered, unable to find the words to convince her to return home early. Aggravated, he groaned. Blurring out his knowledge about their family’s connection to Vader appeared tantalizing, Ben on the brink of giving his own selfish need for free conscious. Regardless of his urge to reveal, Ben knew he could not drop a loaded bomb on his mother when she wasn’t physically there. He’d been cruel, but never bluntly cruel to his mother. He loved her despite her parenting flaws. The grudges he held against her since his childhood were fading scars.

Over the past couple of years, Ben and his mother rebuilt their relationship on honesty, trust, and communication. He did not have the energy nor the patience to fuck it up now.

Trixie whimpered beside his feet; she was waiting for her morning bowl, Ben prolonging her breakfast due to his phone call.

“Why don’t you come visit me?” His mother tried, an edge of hope in her voice.

“What?” Ben rubbed his forehead. “Mom, I can’t really leave—”

“You have never taken a vacation since you started at First Literary.” She reminded him in reprimand, Ben unable to think of a rebuttal to her argument. “You’ll be more relaxed if you did. Maybe you might even meet someone—”

“Mom, I’m not interested,” Ben declared, rolling his eyes at her attempt to set him up again. Ever since he hit his thirtieth birthday, his mother dropped not so subtle hints for him to get married and provide her grandchildren. Normally when the subject was brought up, Ben became mildly annoyed. Still, he let her meddling run its course. Now…well, now the idea of dating someone
who didn’t meet an an extensively specific criteria—and did not possess a certain pair of bright hazel eyes—did not seem appealing.

“I think you’d really like this girl.” Leia pushed, Ben able to picture her staring up at him with her stubborn yet tender eyes. “She’s smart, witty—she’s a writer, Ben!”

“No, I—” Ben huffed, “The thought of a vacation stresses me out.” Ben deflected, ignoring his mother’s noise of discontent. He did not want to dive into the subject of his love life at ten-thirty in the morning on a Monday.

“Fine, then you won’t see me for another two weeks,” Leia stated stubbornly.

“Where the hell are you?” Ben grumbled as he stood up from the dining table. Whistling softly, Ben called for Trixie. Happily, she trotted next to Ben, watching attentively as he scouted the kitchen pantry for dog food.

“Never mind that; can you still take care of my plants?”

“Sure,” Ben replied curtly, “got to feed Trixie. Love you, bye.” He ended the call abruptly.

Adjusting his glasses, Ben glanced around the pantry, finding the bag of kibble on the second to last shelf. Ben dropped down to pour food into Trixie’s bowl. Curiously, she tilted her head at him. “Oh, it’s nothing Beatrice.” Ben assured her, petting Trixie behind her ear. “Just don’t be an idiot like me and get a crush on a girl who lives on the other side of the country.”

“Is this seat taken?”

Pausing her writing, Rey lifted her head to see a blurry form of Leia Organa. Pushing her glasses higher on her nose, Rey smiled hesitantly at the woman.

“Oh, uh, hello Leia,” Rey greeted. She then remembered the woman’s initial question, “Oh, yes please sit.” Rey babbled, reaching for her scattered belongings on the table. For a Monday morning, The Castel was unusually crowded, a mix of students and locals milling about. Normally, Rey would be tucked in her room or apartment for the day, not amongst the masses. She tried repeat her Monday routine, yet without her morning class and messaging Ben, Rey fell into cabin fever. She needed to get out, to have a change of scenery to hopefully have her creative gears churning.

She least expected anyone to join her, especially not Han’s wife. Or not-wife…she was still confused on the matter. In the few moments she interacted with the older woman, Rey found herself enjoying Leia’s presence. The short, soft-yet-sharp woman reminded Rey of her childhood fantasies, of how she imaged her own long lost mother to be. Though, now older, Rey knew her fantasies were rose color glasses to the truth…yet the child inside Rey could not help but bask in the commanding woman’s presense. With minuscule amount of strong women in her life, the young writer latched loosely on to the few she encountered.

Leia sat down, her own coffee and pastry placed on top of the table. To distract herself, Rey sipped her coffee greedily—she did not want to be caught staring.

“Oh, I remember coming here every Monday with my son,” Leia murmured wistfully. “He loved Maz’s chocolate scones.” Rey blinked, stunned by Leia’s casual mention of her and Han’s son. Her discussion with Han coming to the forefront of her mind. He seemed melancholy at the mention of his son, yet here was Leia blissful in her memories. “Ah, I miss this place—Ahch-To.”
Leia shrugged helplessly, gazing out the window into the cloudy spans. The Castle looked out the harbor, the incoming and going of ships in view from the café’s tall windows.

“Not to pry, but if you miss it so much why did you leave?” Rey could not help but ask, fascinated by how easily Leia slipped into the Ahch-To lifestyle. In the couple of days she remained in town, Rey found her to be walking about the streets and speaking to the locals like they were old friends. Which knowing Leia did live in Ahch-To for some time, she probably did know the locals better than Rey.

“Well, someone needs to keep an eye on my son in New York.” She answered, not bothered by the personal question. “And sure as hell wasn’t going to be Han.” Leia chuckled, shaking her head.

“Right.” Rey nodded curtly, her thumb rubbing the rim of her coffee mug. “Well, if it wasn’t for your husband, I’m not too sure if I’d have a job.”

“If it weren’t for you, I’m not too sure my husband would be alive.” Leia replied, her jovial attitude replaced with gentle-aged weariness. The weariness of a woman who was grateful, but exhausted. “He needed competent hands around the Millennium; not that Chewie isn’t great,” Leia corrected herself, “But Han needed some young energy brought into the shop. I believe you did just that.” She confided, patting Rey’s hand.

“Oh,” Rey blushed at the praise, not one to know how to take compliments with grace. “Thank you.” She said, the words feeling like cotton in her mouth. “I love it there, it’s like a second home.” Rey answered honestly.

Han Solo and Chewie made an effort for Rey to feel welcomed with little gestures. Food was the big one, along with genuinely asking about her day and life. He’d jest and mock, but caring half a second later. He’d talk shop, but also listen to her woes of friendship. Strangely enough, Han was a natural father…well everything Rey desired in a father, Han Solo embodied. A childish part of Rey was jealous of this faceless son—a son who gave up a father. Someone who gave a damn about him.

“I’m glad.” Leia commented, slowly digging into her buttered croissant. “Now tell me about the writing you do; Han tells me you got some great stories in you.”

---

**Ben**

*Can I admit something?*

**Rey**

*Absolutely*

**Ben**

*I hate Halloween.*

**Rey**

*Dude. No.*
I honestly loath Halloween.

I do.

And before you ask, it has nothing to do with family trauma.

Rey

If you hate Halloween, why the hell did you let me send you about a dozen pictures yesterday of doggy Halloween costumes?

Ben

You sounded really excited over the phone!

Rey

You still could have said SOMETHING

Ben

I don’t mind the costumes,

and I agree, Trixie would look adorable as Minnie Mouse.

Rey

Can I take a guess as to why you don’t like Halloween?

Ben

No, because you are going to get it wrong ;)

Rey

Really?

Well fucking challenge accepted!

Rey

Well lets see…

You are fine with costumes…

and there is no childhood trauma involved.

Ben

Yes
Rey

Then it must be about the traditions.

Is it because everyone gets drunk on Halloween?

Ben

Nope, that’s actually the only fun part.

Rey

I see. I see.

Rey

It’s the kids isn’t it?

Ben

Yeah…I’m going to just tell you now.

I hate kids.

Ben

Especially on Halloween.

They constantly ring the doorbell, and can be huge brats about the candy.

Ben

Like it’s a crime to give out Jolly Ranchers!

Rey

Oh, that’s it?

Also, it is kind of a crime to give out lame hard candy.

Rey

Kids kind of want the big chocolates and stuff.

Ben

I understand that after getting the evil eye from all the kids in my building.

Rey

I now have this mental image of teeny tiny kids making you cower. It’s hilarious. I’m legitimately cackling.
Ben

Glad to know my misfortune brings you joy

Rey

Oh sod off!

Anyways why were you so afraid to admit you don’t like kids?

Ben

Because majority of the time I get the
spiel of: you only feel that way now,
you’ll feel different with your own kids.

Ben

Rey, the thought of children terrifies me.

Rey

Well, if it’s any consolation, I’m not a fan of kids either.

Ben

I feel like you’re lying for my sake.

Rey

Nope, I swear on my last bottle of wine—
I earnestly am not looking forward to potential motherhood.

Ben

Sure... but I have to ask why.

Rey

Well, growing up without parents kind of makes
it difficult to like the idea of being a parent yourself.

It's the whole, not wanting to make the same mistakes my parents did.

Ben

Ah, I see.

Ben
I completely understand that.

Rey

I knew you would.

Ben

God, now I’m thinking about Halloween
when I was kid.

I went as a pilot four years in a row.

Rey

I need pictures,

NOW.

Ben

I don’t have any.

Rey

That’s a lie. I know you are at your mother’s house!

Ben

Honest to god, I do not have access to any
baby photos or anything else equally as embarrassing.

Ben

You’d be the first to see if I did!

Rey

I am holding you to that Benjamin!

Ben

The pictures are still in my childhood home
with my dad.

Ben

Now that I think about it, a bunch of belongings from high school
and part of college are still with my dad.
It’s a weird thought.

Rey

When was the last time you spoke with him?

Ben

My dad?

Not since I was twenty-one.

Rey

So, ten years.

Ben

Almost eleven.

Rey

I can’t imagine not talking to some for that long.

Ben

It’s possible.

It’s not fun, or really healthy, but possible.

Rey

Why do you say it’s not healthy?

I thought you cut your family out of your life because they hurt you.

Ben

Yes and No.

Rey

How can it be both?

Ben

Rey, believe it or not, I can be an asshole.

Rey

Eh, I believe it. Not much need for the imagination.

Ben

Thanks.
What I’m trying to say is my parents weren’t great,
but so was I—it’s not satisfying to admit.

Ben

I feel like Amilyn lied to me about this part of
Self-acceptance.

Rey

You mean admitting you’re a human being with flaws?

Yeah it’s never easy, but you gotta own up to it.

Ben

Which is what I have been trying to do; I mean I talk to my mother now.
But to see my dad again...after everything we put each other through.
I think it’s more than I can handle.

Rey

Listen, I get it.

But you can’t just sit and do nothing about it.

Rey

This might be forward…but maybe you should call your dad.

Ben

No.

Rey

Ben, don’t be like this.

Whenever you bring it up your dad you clam up.
You can say you miss him. There is nothing wrong with that.

Ben

No. I’m trying to let the past go.

If it means not talking to my dad again.
Then so be it.

Rey
Ben, you are not letting the past go. You are ignoring it. There is a difference.

Ben

And you know so much about letting go of the past?

Rey

Well, no.

I know, I’m being a hypocrite here, but you have the opportunity for closure for actually facing your parents. I don’t.

Ben

I don’t want to talk about this anymore.

“It’s…” Skywalker hummed, scanning the page again. “Different.” He finished. He placed the paper back down on his desk, and his right hand rubbing his chin.

“Different how?” Rey pressed, momentarily forgetting she was not to speak in their workshop.

“Just different.” Her professor shrugged, watching as Rey squirmed in her seat at his vague answer.

“Yes, but how? Can you please explain?” Rey asked, trying her best to keep her frustration levels down. She and Ben discussed the piece of Sunday, but did not bring it up again in any of their conversations the previous day. Not to mention he left their text conversation hanging.

That was the problem with being long distances friends; they can up and ghost someone, not responding to texts, calls, or emails for days. Rey began to feel the complications of this problem the further she and Ben carried out their friendship. When either was upset, or bothered, they’d cease contact—not making an effort to try to talk it out…mostly because they both had the accessible option to ignore each other all together.

Not receiving a message or call back from Ben after their disagreement caused Rey to ruminate, and unfortunately, her writing to suffer.

Initially she planned on speeding through her workshop, to somehow maneuver questions about Ben into the conversation. Despite ending their conversation on not so great terms, Rey still had an agenda; find out what truly transpired between Luke and Ben, and maybe—hopefully—clear the air between the uncle and nephew. Of course, one of the two men she wanted to understand better was an indirect reason behind her snail paced feedback.

“It seems…sad.” Skywalker told her blandly. “You usually have a fire to your work, but this was plain sad.” Leaning forward, he watched her with apprehension. “Are...are you okay?”

“‘Okay’?” Rey repeated, not sure if Skywalker was asking about the state of her wellbeing or of
her mental state—his tone implied both. Disgruntled, Rey sat up straighter. “I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?” He picked up, the piece and read, “‘the distance between us cuts through my wretched soul like mountain spikes.’” Rey winced at the line; maybe Skywalker had a point. “It’s…not bad. But it’s also not great.” He concluded. “Poetry is soulful…but this doesn’t feel like your soul.”

“My soul can be sad.” Rey defended, feeling suddenly exposed. Preconceived notions of her struck again—why did everyone assume she was some happy go-lucky person? Or someone who must be protected from pain or sadness? She felt neglect the moment she was left at child protective services—she knew pain, she knew sadness like lost childhood friend.

“No, I know.” Skywalker noted, as though noticing the slithering tension coiling around her. “I’ve read your other work; you know how to tackle difficult topics.” He pursed his lips, his eyes falling back to the page. “Though there is usually a twinge of hope. Where’s the hope, Rey?”

“Kid, are you okay?” Han asked Rey at work later on Friday.

“I’m fine!” Rey shouted, accidently slamming the hood of the car she was working on. “Why the hell does everyone keep on asking if I’m ‘okay’? I am absolutely fine!”

Han balked at the sudden outburst, “I was just asking because you were staring at the engine without moving for ten minutes.” He told her earnestly.

“Oh,” Rey mumbled, embarrassed for yelling at her boss. Han was merely concerned, watching out for her well-being as he did so often.

“But it looks like somethings on your mind?” Han asked as he went to pull up a chair next to Rey’s work bench.

Staring at the hood of the car forlornly, Rey nodded quietly. “I feel stupid…” She rolled her eyes; she shuffled over to sit beside Han.

“You are one of the least stupidest people I know.” Han complimented her, he nudged her leg with the toe of his boot. “But I have a feeling this has nothing to do with smarts.”

She scrubbed her face with the meat of her hand, getting some dirt marks on her face thought she didn’t mind. “I…” Rey huffed; she’d never admitted it aloud, but who better to listen to Han. He didn’t try to pry too much, but he’d sit and listen when needed. Kind of like Ben.

Damn it. Ben.

“I like someone.” Rey tried again, focusing on her intertwined fingers. “I honestly like someone, and I don’t often feel romantic gushiness, but I do with him.”

“Then what are you sitting here for, go get him!” Han chuckled with a roguish smirk.

“He lives on the other side of the country.” Rey sighed sadly; god, she sounded like some lovesick fool. She hated it. For all her life, Rey did not need anyone…nor did anyone need her. Then Ben came along…he needed her in the same way she needed him, in both the literal and metaphorical sense. “And I think we sort of got into a fight.” She continued, though there was little resentment in her tone. She understood Ben had his demons; she did too, but Ben had the ability to fix his
relationships, whether he believed it or not.

His father was alive, his mother was alive.

Rey could not say the same about her own parents.

Han whistled lowly, “That’s…rough.” He nodded, a solemn mask of understanding shadowing his features.

“Yeah,” Rey agreed, “and being far apart wasn’t so bad in the beginning. We’re just friends, and then…”

“You felt more than friends?” Han completed.

Rey nodded glumly.

“Well…kid, I can’t tell you it gets easier, because it doesn’t. Do you think I like that my princess is in New York, only coming for a visit every couple of months?” Rey shook her head, smiling a little at the mention of Leia. While she wasn’t too sure if the once married couple where romantically together again, or shared an odd sense of friendship, Rey found their devotion to one another inspiring. There wasn’t anyone else out there for them except for each other, and both Han and Leia knew this well. “No. I don’t. But kid,” Han smiled, genuinely smiled—not his smirks or grins, but a smile of a kindred spirit. “You got it bad for this guy. You got all grinny just thinking about him.” He joking bopped one of her three buns on her head, “And it suits you.”

Rey smiled up at Han, feeling like a kid again under his gaze.

“I wouldn’t worry about the little argument,” Han reassured her, “if he’s been talking to you this long, and knows all your little quirks, he’s gonna come running back.”

A grumble from Chewie out front alerted Han of a customer’s presence. Patting her on shoulder, Han stood from his chair and made his over to aid his friend.

As Rey stretched, about to stand up, the Indiana Jones theme song began to play. Glancing down to the source of the lively music, Rey noticed Han accidentally left his cell phone on the chair in his haste.

“Hey Han!” She called out, “your phone’s ringing!”

“Answer it for me Rey,” He shouted back, “I’m a bit busy!”

Shrugging, Rey reached for the phone, frowning at the area code. Why would Han be receiving a phone call from someone on the east coast? Picking up the phone, Rey quickly swiped the green icon. “Hello,” She greeted, pressing the speaker to her ear.

“Uh…I’m sorry I think I might have called the wrong number,” A familiar deep, smooth voice spoke.

“If you’re looking for Han he’s busy at the moment,” Rey replied, realizing whoever was calling did not expect anyone, but Han, to answer.

“Then I did call the right number,” The man chuckled hollowly.

“Do you want to leave a message?” Rey asked as she began to dig around her workstation, on the hunt for a notepad and pen. She came up short, with only a permanent marker at her disposal.
Deciding to better have a message for Han, than forgetting who she spoke to three seconds after the call, Rey popped off the lid of the pen. She poised the pen over her bare wrist, prepared to write the persons name. “May I ask whose calling?”

“Ben,” Rey quickly wrote the first name, without comprehending the words he spoke, “Tell him, its Ben Solo.” Looping the ‘l’ to the ‘o’, Rey paused. Did this guy just say his name was Ben…Ben Solo?

“Pardon me?” Rey licked her lips. No way…this would be absurd. A man who sounded like Ben, calling Han of all people, and saying his name was ‘Ben’. “What was your name again?”

“Ben Solo,” He grumbled, sounding oddly like Han for a moment, “How many times do I need to say my name for you to write it down? Its three syllables.”

Rey suddenly felt prickly at his words. Only her Ben would snap and mention syllables of all things as the brunt of an insult.

“Oh sod off,” She grumbled almost automatically, though inside she was highly aware of the chaos of attempting to understand Ben—Ben Solo—had become.

“What are you British or something?” He shot out, obviously not in the mood for conversation, yet knowing Ben, he had a difficult time keeping his annoyance in check.

“Oh, do you say that to all the pretty European girls?” Rey snipped, acutely remembering their first messages to each other. He pointed out her slang as though it were a beauty mark. Noticeable, but endearing to him.

“Rey?” He asked in disbelief, confirming Rey’s theory. “Is this Rey?”

She gulped. “Yes. This is Rey,” She nodded—before rolling her eyes at herself, realizing Ben could not actually see her. “Rey Kenobi.”

“Why the hell are you answering my dad’s phone?”

“Han’s your dad?—I mean I barely caught you two were related by the last name.” She babbled, trying her best not to hyperventilate. “But, Han Solo my boss is your dad? How on Earth?” She muttered, rubbing her forehead, without a doubt getting an oil stain on her skin.

“You work for my father?” Ben practically barked, “I mean, I tried to have the benefit of the doubt when I found out you go to Ahch-To U. I mean Ahch-To is frustratingly tiny—”

Rey blinked back in surprise, “I never told you where I live!” She interrupted, both puzzled by how he acquired this knowledge and offended about his quip if Ahch-To. “And I love Ahch-To! It is wonderful here!”

“I’m not saying Ahch-To is bad.” He explained, “I actually love Ahch-To, I didn’t want to leave.” He sighed deeply, “I…am finding it extremely ironic you work for my dad.” A shuddered breath sounded over the receiver, followed by another. “This— this is a lot. I barely had the courage to call my dad, but now—” Ben sounded out of breath, his voice cracking and stuttering.

Rey’s eyes widen as her brain tried to put the pieces together. Ben was Han’s son. She can freak out about that later—no, she was going to video call Ben later and they were going to talk it out. Han was also the father who was in the car accident with Ben, but also Ben is the son who cut off ties with Han all together. Somehow she found herself stuck in the middle of another 'Ben and his family member do not speak' situation.
Except this hit a little too close to home for Rey. Han…Han was a father figure to her—will always fill the void left by her own parents. Yet, Ben…was Ben.

“Take some deep breaths, counting down from ten.” She ordered him gently, keeping her eye on where Han left. Over the phone, she heard Ben follow her instructions.

“Rey—I—I need to go. Just…just tell him I called.” He stuttered out, Rey imagining Ben pinching the bridge of his nose, with a hand on his hip. Similar to how she’d seen him on their most recent video call…or when Han Solo became aggravated with a customer.

“I get off in a half hour,” She blurted out before he could end the call, “Just—just don’t do anything stupid until I call you back, okay?” She asked softly, unable to help but think of all the instances Skywalker spoke of Ben when he was his student. In an instant she felt regret for thinking such thoughts; the Ben Skywalker knew was not the Ben she knew…ten years passed between the time either seen each other. Logically, Ben had changed in that time. Rey simply did not like how these contradicting forms of Ben battled for dominance in her mind.

“Yeah, yeah I’ll be fine.” He answered briskly, “I’ll talk to you in a bit. Love you, bye.” He uttered out quickly, ending the call. The words were jumbled together, though Rey heard the last three words, clearly.

Her heart stopped, only to pick back up again with a chest pounding thump.

“Hey kid, who called?” Han asked as he strolled back up to her work station.

Gaping, unable to find the air to speak, Rey glanced down at her wrist. The name Ben Solo written in her sloppy cursive.

“Ben.”

Chapter End Notes

If you follow me on tumblr, you might be well aware of the hell this chapter has gave me. It was rough because important conversations needed to happen, and I had to fit a week into this chapter. And week mostly from Rey's POV...no worries, next chap is going to be Ben heavy with a session with out favorite therapist Amilyn, and the introduction of a couple of characters I have been keeping at bay :)

Also, if it feels like there is some type of reveal in each chapter...thats because Rey and Ben are in what I would like to call a 'Loose Thread Situation'-- Ben revealed Luke was his uncle, this is Rey's loose thread to follow. The loose thread that is unraveling all these other connections neither noticed are becoming glaringly obvious or stunning because now they have new lenses. Ben's loose thread to follow is the Poe connection; he realizes Poe is Amilyn's boyfriend but also the same Poe Rey was friends with--which then reveals other connections to Rey he never asked about or noticed.

I'm not entirely happy with this chapter, but I needed to get it out before it consumed too much of my time.

Comments and Kudos are always appreciated! Let me know what you think; I love
discussing the fic with my readers!

Follow me on tumblr: @intp-slytherin97
The Darkness Rises...and the Light to Meet It

Chapter Summary

Ben makes new discoveries, and learns being in love might not be all its cracked up to be.

Chapter Notes

Typos will be fixed throughout the week :D

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rey

You know how I said I would call?

Ben

Yes

Rey

Yeah.

I can’t.

Rey

Your dad kind of freaked out.

Ben

Freaked out?

Freaked out good, or freaked out bad?

Rey

He said ‘fucking bastard’.

Then proceeded to cry.

Rey

And then he laughed?
Ben

Why the question mark?

Rey

Because I am not too sure if he was crying so much he was laughing, or he was laughing so much he cried?

Ben

You ended with another question mark.

I’m not liking this. I’m not liking this at all.

Rey

Well your dad’s EXTREMELY DIFFICULT to read!

Ben

Well is he alone? What’s going on?

Please tell Chewie is there or someone!

Rey

Calm the hell down, I’m with him!

Why else would I not be calling you?

Ben

Sorry.

Ben

A lots kind of going on.

Rey

No shit.

Rey

Your mom—Leia is your mom right?—Just got here

Ben

My mom is there?

What the hell?
Yes, she’s been here all week.

Rey

Did you NOT know where your mother went on vacation?

Ben

No, she didn’t say!

Rey

What if there was an emergency,
and you didn’t know where she was?

Ben

Rey, she does this. She’ll go off for a couple of days then come back.

I am her son, not her keeper.

Ben

But, she’s in Ahch-To?

Rey

Yes. Has been here all week.

Ben

Is everyone in fucking Ahch-To except for me?

Rey

Apparently

Ben

Has he calmed down?

Rey

Sort of.

Rey

Him and Leia are kind of arguing and, dare I say, flirting?

Ben

Are you serious?
Ben
And you’re just standing there?

Rey
….yeah

Ben
WELL STOP THEM!

Rey
You want me to interrupt your parents?

Ben
YES.
Rey, you must understand—this is there thing.
They will argue, bicker, and flirt.
Then they will do something they both regret.
It’s a cycle.

Rey
First of all, kind of gross you know your parents
have an active sex life. Second, interrupting is rude!

Ben
YOU DO IT ALL THE TIME

Rey
Not to my boss! I still need to work Ben!
I have bills and rent to pay, like a normal human being.

Ben
Then tell him you know me.

Rey
Ben, hate to break it to you but I don’t
think you are viable get out of jail free card.
Point taken.

Okay, they are no longer bickering.

Shit, I think they want to talk to me.

Fuck.

“Not that I don’t like our sessions, but if I recall correctly we had a great one yesterday.” Amilyn greeted Ben, holding the front door open for him. He nodded curly, entering her apartment with his head tucked down. “You sounded urgent on the phone,” She continued, leading Ben to her kitchen. His godmother was an angel on Earth, agreeing to meet with him first thing on a Saturday morning for an impromptu therapy session.

Walking through the foyer, the two turned right, into the kitchen where several plates of pastries were set. Usually, their sessions were in Amilyn’s study or her living room when Poe wasn’t around. Rarely did Ben enter her kitchen, the room displaying a sacred presence. It was no secret Amilyn’s own therapy was baking, if the amount of baked goods in her home only serving as supporting evidence. Respectfully, Ben did not want to taint Amilyn’s sanctuary with his own woes.

Though she did not seem to mind by the way she stared at him patiently. Feeling the burn of her gaze, he took a reluctant seat at her kitchen table.

“Yeah,” Ben breathed, stuffing his fists into his coat pockets. His foot bounced up and down, releasing some of his nervous energy through the mindless movement. “I may have done something…well said something I shouldn’t have.” Amilyn quirked an eyebrow as she set the table for tea. “I told Rey I loved her.” He blurted out, wincing as the scene replayed on repeat in his mind.

Honestly, his mouth moved on its own accord. Sure, he definitely felt something akin to love for Rey. Especially when she spoke softly and tried to calm him down. He wondered if she were there in person if she’d have a feather touch or a firm, tender grip to steady him in their world.

God, he did not deserve to have someone, who’s compassionate and honest, like Rey in his life.

Amilyn dropped her tea spoon in her hand.

“Oh,” She blinked, “That is quite a leap, Ben.” She busied herself with picking out the tea cups, Ben watching as she plucked his favorite cup from the cupboard—the one with the chip by the handle and painted daisies. His favorite tea cup since he was a boy going to Auntie Amylin’s. “Did she say it back?” She asked nervously, pouring Ben and herself tea in their respective cups.

“Well you see,” Ben began, Amilyn halting her movements at his words. “I accidentally told her as
I was hanging up on the phone.”

“And did you call her back?” She asked, moving to sit in the chair opposite Ben.

“No.” Amilyn’s jaw dropped, her eyes widening in horror. Ben felt his pulse spike in panic. “We were supposed to talk later, but then something came up and so we resorted to texting. But then she didn’t bring it up, and I thought ‘hey, if she’s not bring it up, I shouldn’t bring it up.’”

“Oh, this is not ‘Dr. Holdo’ speaking, but Auntie Ami—what the fuck is wrong with you Ben?” She huffed, dropping her hands on her lap. “You do not tell a girl you love her, and not talk about!”

“My dad’s Han Solo, do you really think I knew what to do in that type of situation?” Ben huffed, dropping his head into his hands.

“Of course not, but I at least hoped you’d have some semblances of common sense.” She replied, standing up again. Crossing back to the kitchen counter, Amilyn picked up their tea and brought it over to the table. “Now—you told her you love her.” She placed his tea in front of him, made exactly the way he liked it, watching over him as though he was the six year old boy who had a difficult time picking up the tea cup without spilling. “How does this make you feel, Ben?”

He eyed Amilyn hesitantly, “Are you Dr. Holdo or Auntie Ami right now?”

“Who do you need the most?” She asked, though the softness of her gaze told Ben she knew the answer.

“My Auntie Ami.” Ben said easily.

“Alright,” She leaned back in her chair, “What were you thinking? What even happened?” Amilyn asked, picking up a blueberry muffin from painstakingly arranged plater. “Yesterday, you left my office in a best mood I’ve seen you in for weeks!” She punctuated her statement with a vicious bite into her muffin, little periwinkle curls off-poised by the movement.

Poor Amilyn had her work cut out for her; despite her occupation, the woman was susceptible to stress as any other individual. There was a reason her home consistently smelled of sugar, bread, and warmth—stress baking.

For the past week, Ben slowly untangled the mess of his family with Amilyn. Initially hesitant to expose his knowledge to her, he soon realized his concerns were nonexistent. Surprisingly, his godmother knew nothing about his family’s little Vader situation. His mother and Amilyn were close, but apparently not close enough for Leia to reveal their entire family history to her supposed best friend.

Even though it took an extended three hour emergency session, Ben for the most part accepted himself as Vader’s grandson, and heir apparent to his publication legacy.

He raked a hand through his hair, his nicely brushed locks out of place as usual. Dejectedly, he crossed his arms over his chest, filled with the weight of betrayal. “Mom’s in Ahch-To.”

“No.” She shook her head, chewing with more fervor. Ben felt foolish for doubting his Auntie Amilyn would not be on his side, or not put the effort to try and understand his perspective on the situation. Luckily, she was well attuned to his emotions concerning his family. One needed to be when they were friends with the Skywalkers and Solos.

“Yes!” Ben exclaimed, nearly jumping out of his chair in indignation. “She has been in Ahch-To all week, with my father of all people! And Rey apparently works for my dad and she picked up the
“She works for Han?” Amilyn shook her head, crumpling her muffin wrapper. “Not to sound cliché, but it sounds like you were destined to meet this girl.”

Ben rolled his eyes, yet his blush rose up his neck to his ears. “Yes, she works for him. I kind of freaked out over the phone, because I was actually doing what she suggested—”

“For what I can tell, she’s a very smart girl. Good influence, I mean I’ve been telling you to do that for years.” Amilyn interjected quickly, “But you were saying…” She waved for him to continue his venting rant.

“Then, we decided to call each other back later, and the phrase just came out.” He huffed, his focus on the little chipped part of his tea cup. He wallowed in his own misfortune at the memory.

Cold realization struck him the moment he hung up the phone, his farewell words replaying over and over in his mind on a loop.

‘Love you, bye’?

‘Love you, bye’?

‘LOVE YOU, BYE’?

Similar to Amilyn’s testament, he could not help but think what the fuck was wrong with him. With his festering dramatics, he all but threw himself on to his bed and screamed in frustration into his pillow. Of course, things did not get better when his phone’s notification rang ‘Slytherin!’, his personalized text message chime for her. With dread in his gut, Ben checked his phone to have a second hand retelling of his parent’s dramatics.

Honestly, the night only went downhill from there. During his self-loathing and rumination, Trixie got into the pantry and tore up her bag of kibble. Then the electrical momentarily went out because of the rain storm wreaking havoc outside. Due to the power outage, Ben searched the entire house because he forgot where the breaker was located. Eventually, he found himself on a venture to the dark, spider infested basement to the breaker box.

He tripped on the stairs. Twice. Once down, and once up.

Sitting in his godmother’s home only reminded Ben sometimes life liked to hand him crates of lemons, and he only knew how to make sour puckering lemonade. At least, that what his mother often told him when he merely focused on the negative. Gently, the pad of his thumb stroked the jagged porcelain. His mind slowed down as he repeated the motion. “I mean…she never brought it up when we were texting. Maybe she thought it was like a friendly ‘love you’.”

“I highly doubt that.” Amilyn countered, gazing at him with an odd fondness Ben could not place.

“Now you are just being optimistic.” Ben resigned, lifting his tea. He sipped the warm to drink to busy himself, to avoid her all-knowing eyes.

“Is it so hard to believe someone might actually like you for you, Ben?” Amilyn asked, dropping her chin in the palm of her hand. “Has she done anything to cause you to think she might not feel the same?”

“No, but she also hasn’t done anything to cement she does like me in that way.” Ben said childishly, sounding for once in his life like a lovesick teen. Only fifteen years later than his peers,
and Ben finally understood the woes of crushes, turbulent romantic feelings, and god-awful lust for a particular person.

Why the hell did Rey have to stumble into his life? Not that he was necessarily happier per-say before she integrated herself into his daily routine, however many miles lingered between them… but he experienced this newfound misery. An insatiable longing rest in his chest cavity whenever he thought of her—which was ridiculous, since he talked to her nearly every day, for several hours out of the day. She wasn’t dead or scorned to him…she just wasn’t there. Loneliness embodied a new definition once he experienced how it felt to not be alone. Rey made him feel less lonely, yet completely lonely all at once. A terrible paradox, especially since he’d seek her company in the smallest things. Asking of her thoughts and opinions through messaging on matters she’s never truly witness because of their limited communication.

“Clearly, you are not in the mood to listen to my wise advice.” Amilyn plucked a scone from her arrangement. “How’s ‘Vader’s Most Wanted’ going?”

“Not… horrible, but also not great.” Sadly, Ben ran into several dead ends with the list.

Mace Windu had very little information to offer, only saying he knew Anakin in a work setting and had been surprised when he received a sum of money in the will. Though, Ben knew it was Windu who fought along Anakin to hire Ben despite his track record with violent outbursts and his mental-emotional state. Ben would not have put it past his grandfather to thank the man for helping his grandson obtain employment.

The next person on his list, Satine Kyrez, was extremely difficult to get in contact with since she became a recluse after her lover, Benjamin W. Kenobi passed. Both she and Kenobi, and their remaining relatives (marked as descendants in the will) were listed in Anakin’s will. She received the belongings in his library, collections of first editions and signed copies, as had it once been partially Kenobi’s in their younger years.

His own parents and Luke were listed as well…but Ben did not want to open the can of worms until he felt prepared to tackle the situation level headed. He knew he needed to—not only for his sake, but for First Order Literary’s. As for now, he liked the comfort of his parents being on the other side of the country. As for Luke, Ben hoped he did not pop up anywhere soon. Last he heard, his uncle was on an extended sabbatical in Ireland.

Though the next two on his list left him curious…Paige and Rose Tico. The Tico sisters, if Ben recalled correctly in his brief interactions with Paige at First Order Literary.

“I only have a few more people to speak with…then I think I’ll finally figure out what I’m going to do.” Then Ben decided in the moment with Amilyn as his witness. “If…if I cannot find out more about Anakin, from people who actually knew him, and his company…then I’ll leave.”

“Leave the First Order?” Amilyn sat up from her slouch, attentive to Ben’s thought process.

Begrudgingly, he swallowed his fears; he wanted to honor his grandfather’s legacy, but how could he if he knew understood the man? Never truly knew him, or what he stood for?

He was thirty-one, young by most standards, with his life ahead of him. Yes, First Order Literary opened doors…but maybe Ben needed to finally pick a path for himself and not wait for his situation to get better at the journal. Anyone in his position with two eyes knew the best option was to leave; to leave before it became impossible to move on once wrapped up in Snoke’s inner circle. Plus, he may have a future elsewhere…maybe with someone else…and he did not want to be tangled in these matters. It would only bring both of them down.
He could never do that to her. Romantic relationship or not, Rey mattered to him. She deserved a companion who wasn’t being wasted away, drowning in untapped potential.

“Yes.”

Amilyn smiled proudly, silently toasting her tea to her godson.

---

knightofren@holo.com

RE: Poem Final Draft

Here are my notes on your poem.

Let me know if you have questions.

PoemsAreDifficultandSad.pdf

Also, I recommend changing the name of the document. I don’t think your prof will appreciate it.

Ben

scavengerkenobi@outpost.org

RE: Poem Final Draft

Thanks!

Rey

“Miss Tico,” The young woman jumped at the mention of her surname. Swiveling around in her chair, she turned to face Ben.

“Ah—Mr. Ren. It’s a surprise to see you? Did…did we have a meeting scheduled?” She asked, riffling through her planner before she finished her question.

In the six years Ben was working at First Order Literary, he’d only been in the Human Resources Department twice. Once, to turn in his paper work when he’d been initially hired. Then Mr. Windu was head of the department, retiring two years later, with the young—newly graduated, Paige Tico, as his replacement. Second, to file a sexual harassment report when Qi’ra in Sales tried to get a little too hands-y with him three years ago.

Every other meeting concerning HR was held in one of the upper level conference rooms, Ben never needing to venture to the offices three floors below in recent years. Until now, when the names Paige and Rose Tico were documented on his grandfather’s will.

Why would Vader include the head of Human Resources and her sister in his will? The longer Ben sat with the information, he began to realize Vader had an exceptional amount of ties for a supposedly secluded and anti-social man.

“No,” Ben assured her, taking a step into her small office. He dwarfed the space with his stature,
venturing to take a seat in the opposite chair. “I’m here concerning a matter involving,” He dropped his voice lower, “Vader.”

Tico froze at the mention of his name.

“Concerning what about Mr. Vader?” She displayed an aura of professionalism, though the shift in her eyes reflected wariness.

“His will.” Ben stated plainly.

“I can take an early lunch.” She said as she twisted her pen between her thumb and pointer finger. “If you can wait…?”

She seemed unsure of making the request, probably expecting Ben to turn it down. Ben nodded. Not quite smiling, but radiating enough calmness.

Tico released her held breath. “Great, I just need to send this email and then we can discuss the will. I’m sure you might have questions.” Her chair twisted back to her monitor, her keys clicking and clacking a few moments. Ben tried his best to busy himself. He texted Rey asking if she’d be free to talk later that afternoon. For the last few days she’d been quiet on her end, only responding with variations of monosyllables or emojis. Thankfully, in this instance she immediately texted back:

Rey

Swamped with classwork. I have midterms until Wednesday.

Maybe we can talk then :)

A negative thought gnawed at him—she must feel awkward about the ‘love you’ he said at the end of their call on Friday. It'd been three days and she still seemed to be avoiding him. Maybe Rey didn’t want to talk to him because she didn’t know how to speak with him since his accidental confession—

“All ready to go?” Tico turned back to him with a strained smile, her purse slung over her shoulder.

“Yes.” Ben rushed to stand, opening the office door for her.

Silently, the two walked to the elevators in companionable silence. Ben cleared his throat, pressing the ground button.

Once the elevator began travel down, Paige glanced up at him, “So…were…were you in the will? There wasn’t a public reading or anything.”

“Technically, yes.” Ben answered, stuffing his hands into his pockets. He watched as the floor levels dropped. “But I’m more curious on your connections to Vader.”

The doors pinged open, the two unanimously agreeing to put a pin in their conversation until the possibility of eavesdroppers were nonexistent. Paige led the way out of the building, Ben following with less enthusiasm. They passed by a few co-workers, Paige waving brightly while Ben maintained his stone-faced demeanor. Exiting on to the street, she picked up her pace to keep up with his long gait.

“My sister and I grew up in Tatooine.” Paige finally spoke up when they reached the crosswalk. The name sounded familiar, Ben recalling Vader mentioning he grew up in said town. “When we
were kids, Vader would visit for Read Across America at our school.” The WALK sign lit up, the two crossing briskly amongst the other city dwellers. “He found out we were foster children, and decided to just help Rose and I…I guess he somehow saw himself in us.” She spoke shyly about Anakin, as though she was both grateful but secretive of their connection. Ben didn’t blame her; the founder of the journal she worked at supporting her family was private information. Anyone would feel uncomfortable admitting these facts when they had been tight lip about the situation for over a decade. “At least that’s what he told me and my sister.”

Ben consumed the information, considering Paige’s words. “So…he helped? For how long?”

They slowed down in front of the closest Starbucks. Not Ben’s preferred coffee spot, but he’d let it slide for this one instance. He needed Tico to open up, even if it meant subpar coffee. Don’t be a snob, the phrase flittered in his mind, a common remark made by Rey.

“Until he passed away.” She answered, squinting up at Ben through the harsh midday sunlight. “And even now. What he left us in the will was enough to help cover the remaining of Rose’s college tuition. He didn’t have to, but he did.” She spoke simply, opening the coffee shop’s door for Ben.

Cautiously, Ben stood by the entrance not quit comprehending how forth coming Paige seemed to be. She had to have an agenda, or a motive.

Or maybe she’s just nice, people can be nice.

“Why are telling me all this?”

“Because you asked,” Paige said with wisdom beyond her years; more appropriately, gained wisdom from the necessity to grow up for her sister to remain a child a little longer. “You’re a lot like him. The good parts of him, Ben, not the questionable.”

“How did you know my name?” Ben balked, not once recalling releasing his name to his co-workers. He liked to keep his birth name as private as possible.

“I work in HR, I know everyone’s real name Mr. Solo.” She stated the obvious answer, if not with more sarcasm than he expected from the mild mannered woman. “Now can we please get lunch? I wasn’t kidding about taking my lunch break early.”

“Sure,” Ben entered through the awaiting door. “Lunch is on me.”

---

**Ben**

Did you turn in the poem?

**Rey**

Yes.

**Ben**

How do you feel about it?

**Rey**
Ben

Nothing you’re concerned about?

Liked about it? Was your prof a dick again?

Rey

I didn’t see my prof. I emailed it.

Rey

Sorry, I can't talk right now.

Maybe we can have a video chat later in the week.

Ben

Whatever you need to do.

Focus on your work. :)

Rey

Thank you :)

Ben

Hey, when would be a good time to talk?

Ben

Is everything okay? You’ve kind of been radio silent.

Ben

And that’s very unlike you.

Ben

Not even a meme or emoji?

Ben

Rey?
Ben

TrixieHalloween.jpg

Ben

I took your suggestion and dressed her up as Minnie Mouse for Halloween.

Ben

She hates the ears.

“So Trixie, what should I watch,” Ben clicked through his Netflix, “I’m almost done with Parks and Rec, but should I watch the last three episodes, or save them?”

Beside him on the couch, Trixie barked, before dropping her head on top of her paws. Her chewed up Minnie Mouse ears were pulled back to her mouth, Trixie happily destroying her costume piece.

“Yes, that doesn’t help at all, girl.”

The doorbell rang. Again.

Ben groaned, Trixie yipping in agreement.

The dreaded day had finally arrived; Halloween. For a fleeting moment, Ben thought he dodged the holiday all together; he wasn’t currently living in his building, thanks to his mother’s ‘vacation’. Which gloriously meant he did not have to bother with the children who lived in his apartment complex. His work commute was longer, but not awful enough for Ben to leave the commodities of Leia’s home.

What he did not take in account was the Trick-or-Treat foot traffic to be ridiculously high in the suburbs. Logically, Ben should have realized this, yet an ignorant part of him believed mostly older citizens lived in his mother’s neighborhood. Not families. Not so many families.

Gurgle shouts of ‘trick-or-treat’ echoed down the street, loud enough for Ben to hear in the safety of the living room. He scowled every time the doorbell rang, promptly ignoring the cries.

There was a bowl of candy (the variety pack chocolates, no Jolly Rangers for ungrateful children) sitting on the front porch with a sign—‘Take One’. Ben quickly learned kids did not listen; the doorbell rang every few minutes, his carefully crafted sign ignored at every opportunity.

Insistently the doorbell rang, as though the kid was pressing the button speedily. The brass echoing tune vibrated the house, cutting itself midway every time the button was pressed, only to restart with the first dong.
Stubbornly, Ben sat planted in his spot.

Then the *knocking* began.

Grumbling, Ben stood up from the couch, charging to the front door.

“Goddamn it, do you not see the fucking sign?” Ben shouted, throwing open the door to have a word or two with the kid’s parents. “It’s not that—”

His next words died on his lips when he saw it was not a child, but a young woman. Her back was turned to him, she watching as kids in various costumes ran down the street cheering and giggling. A duffle bag rested by her Converse clad feet and her oversized sweater obscured her frame.

Feeling his presence she turned around, Ben’s eyes connected with the familiar hazel he adored. He suddenly realized cameras did zero justice to her natural beauty. Her eyes far brighter in the warm glow of the porch light and backlight of the full moon. Her smile gentler in the flesh, Ben never sure if she earnestly smiled to him until this moment.

She…she had *freckles*…the most adorable light freckles, only seen in close proximity. God, he didn’t even *know* and...

“Hi.” She said, shifting from foot to foot under his awestruck gaze.

“Rey,” He breathed, his voice cracking a bit. “I…” He rubbed his eyes, confirming she was indeed there. In person. Standing right in front of him. “Wha—How?”

She threw her head back as she laughed at his jumbled words, Ben feeling an undeniable grin growing on face at the sound. “I…” She blinked widely, unable to find the words to speak. Just as lost in his presence.

“You’re beautiful.” Ben blurted out, his mouth moving faster than his brain. Instinct told him to apologize or duck away in embarrassment, yet when Rey was there he could not look away. The thought to remove his gaze from her being felt blasphemous…and he wasn’t lying. She was beautiful, even after what seemed to be a day of traveling and exhaustion from her midterms. Those lingering facts amplified her beauty…because by some way she was here. On the other side of the country to see him.

Bashfully, she tucked her hair behind her ear, a flattered yet off-beat nervous chuckle escaping her. “Th—thank you.” She stared back, her eyes boring into his--she couldn’t quite believe she was there either. "You're handsome yourself..." She trailed off before dropping her gaze away, pink dusting her cheekbones.

“Yes, well…” He cleared his throat, ignoring how flustered he became to the quiet compliment. Rey looking back up expectantly. Remembering they were standing outside in the cold, he held the door open wider, “Do you want to co—”

Without warning, Rey threw her arms around his neck, her body slammed awkwardly into his. Ben stumbled a couple steps back, her momentum slightly throwing him off kilter. On reflex, Ben caught her in his arms, unintentionally lifting her a few inches off the floor. Quickly, in their embrace they found balance in each other.

She clutched him tightly, her fingers pressed firmly into the space between his shoulder blades, as though he were to vanish any second. Immediately, Ben understood why some people liked hugs…the affection was comforting and reaffirming, especially when someone cared with the same gravity as himself.
“It’s so nice to finally see you in person.” She muttered into his collar, Ben feeling her breath tickle his skin. He nodded against her shoulder, his eyes watering as he held her close.

“Yeah, it is.”

Chapter End Notes

So how do you guys feel? Does this top 'Love you, bye'? Hahaha.

I cried tears of joy writing that last scene, like I cried A LOT, tbh. There was reason this one was so Ben-centric ;)

We will find out how exactly Rey ended up on Ben's doorstep next chapter. It's a journey friends.

Please tell me what you guys think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers :D
Follow me on Tumblr @intp-slytherin97
After what seemed to be eternity, Ben and Rey slowly untangled themselves from each other. Carefully, Ben eased her back down, putting a few inches of comfortable distance between them.

“Here, let me take that.”

Ben reached for Rey’s duffle on the porch. He stepped aside as he allowed her to enter the warmer foyer. From the depths of the house, Trixie barked. Her tiny paws scurried across the hardwood floor, the miniature schnauzer coming into view from the end of the long hallway. Giddily, she planted herself in front of Rey, the young woman lighting up at the sight of Trixie. The dog stretched on Rey’s shins, panting up at her happily.

“May I?” Rey asked as she crouched to Trixie’s level, the dog already attempting to lap kisses on her cheek.

“Oh, my dear are you Minnie Mouse?” She adjusted Trixie’s doggy dress, the sleeves slipping down her front legs. “You are the absolute cutest Trixie!” Rey cooed to his dog, loving her as though Trixie were her own pet.

Catching himself staring, Ben whistled for Trixie to fall back. Hearing her master, Trixie trotted over to his side. “Not that—not that I’m not happy to see you in person.” He held his hand out, she clasping her hand in his. Quickly, he pulled Rey back up to stand. “But how did you get here?”
Walking down the hall, Rey crossed her arms loosely, taking in her surroundings. “The short or long answer?”

“Short.” Ben decided as they entered the open kitchen and living area.

“Your mother is a very generous woman and insisted I take her round trip ticket here.”

Rey’s explanation sounded like something his mother would do…but also not. Ben felt his suspicions rise against the tide of his joy. Leia Organa-Solo never made a decision without a plan. Giving Rey her returning ticket only meant one thing—she had an agenda. Somehow his dear friend became wrapped in his family’s web of meddling. However, Rey seemed pleased to be caught, making herself comfortable on a stool at the kitchen counter, picking through his left over shrimp pasta dinner. Against his usual response to his mother’s insert into his life, Ben found it difficult to be bothered by her when she was the reason Rey was there in the first place.

Setting her belongs by the couch opposite the television, Ben made his way to the empty seat beside Rey.

“I take it they know about our little—”

“Yeah,” Rey nodded, skewering a shrimp with a forgotten fork. She swallowed her food. “I’m sorry, but I have this thing where I feel uncomfortable eating on planes. Plus I know you know how to cook.” She twirled the fettucine pasta with the fork into a decent sized ball. Ben fought an amused grin; from their video chats, he knew Rey was a scavenger when it came to eating. He believed it became a habit in her childhood she could never shrug off. Once he ate an entire large peperoni and mushroom pizza and cheesy-garlic bread in one sitting while on video chat with him. Seeing her in person, Ben wondered where she put it all, the young woman’s body lean and toned.

“Go ahead, help yourself.” Ben gestured to the dish filled with pasta, not bothering to tell Rey to grab a plate. She was a quarter done with her food anyways. “I was just going to put it in the fridge.”

Rey hummed appreciatively as she stuffed more pasta in her mouth. “This is delicious.” She moaned.

Ben coughed, waiting expectantly. Sensing his eyes on her, Rey plucked a napkin from the stack on the counter. She wiped lingering sauce from her lips and corner of her mouth, smiling when she and Ben made eye contact again. He wasn’t staring, honestly. It was simply difficult to not study her when she was in the room.

Catching each other’s stares happened more in the past three minutes than either thought would ever occur in their lifetime.

“Right!” She swiftly swallowed her mouth full, “I told Han and Leia,” Ben flinched a twinge at the mention of his father. If Rey noticed she didn’t comment on it, plowing through her explanation, “that you help me with my writing, and that we met through a tutoring program. Simple.” She looked back up at Ben, her meal set aside. “They…got really excited to know you have a friend that you can truly talk to about anything…”

“And I’m assuming that’s when my mother told you to hop on a plane to see me?” Ben shifted in his set, his body slight too large for the stool. He opted to ‘casually’ lean against the kitchen counter; he probably appeared foolish, like he did not know how to sit nor stand properly.

“Yup,” She said, “Leia is an extremely difficult person to say ‘no’ to.”
“It’s the eyes, they pull you in and warn an existential crisis if you don’t listen.” Ben joked, his stomach fluttering when Rey’s nose crinkled, she on the verge of a snort.

Her head titled to the side, her knots of messy buns bopping. “You have your mother’s eyes.” She noted. “Very pretty dark eyes.”

Silence fell between the two, neither he nor Rey looking away from each other…that is until Trixie yipped from the couch.

Ben cleared his throat, standing up to clean the kitchen. Better to busy his hands to ignore the urge to pull her close once more. “Ah, how long do thing you’ll be here?” Ben asked as he began washing one of the pans he left lying around.

She swiveled a bit on the pale green, old fashioned stools that matched the rest of the kitchen’s aesthetic. If Ben’s parents had one thing in common, it was their love of nostalgia and antiques. Though he would say—not sure any more as it had been years—his father was more along the lines of a hoarder, while his mother was a true collector. Nevertheless, both were enthusiasts. Leia even had her kitchen remodeled to a mid-nineteen-fifties kitchen, with paneling and pale green paint. She claimed it reminded her of the Organa kitchen from her childhood. Ben did little to fuss after learning that information.

“Classes start back up on Tuesday—so I guess until Monday morning.” Rey rested her elbows on the counter, her eyes roving the space. From the fridge, to the sink, to the stove. “I saw your sign.” She grinned mischievously.

“My what?” Ben blinked, momentarily forgetting where he was while she was in the room. He felt the water in the sink running a bit cold; he’d been scrubbing the same spot for the last two minutes.

She jumped off the stool, then picked up the large entrée bowl of shrimp and pasta she’d been eating. Walking the perimeter of the island-like counter, Rey bumped up beside Ben. “Your sign; ‘Please Take One’.” She shook her head, craning her neck up to look at him. “No one listens to those. I’m pretty sure the entire bowl is gone except for the Milky Ways.”

“No one got Milky Ways? What is wrong with children these days?” Ben huffed exasperatedly, finding new passion in washing the pan he’d been holding for far too long. He felt her eyes on him, radiating warmth rather than cold as one would expect from her. While through texts and emails she seemed to sharp and rough around the edges, seeing her move easily in the kitchen in her University of Ahch-To sweater—oddly enough the same exact one he had buried in his apartment closet—she was softer, the tension she seemed to carry on her shoulders lighter.

“Where is your Tupperware?” Rey asked eyeing the array of cabinets.

“Bottom left cabinet. Rey you don’t—”

“Yes. I will and I will help with whatever else.” She declared, leaving zero room for argument. She found the plastic containers easily, putting away the leftover food.

In companionable silence, the two cleaned the kitchen. Occasionally, Ben heard Rey hum a non-melodious tune while she dried the dishes he washed, she completely unaware of his gaze.

Or at least he hoped she was completely unaware.

“I’m sorry,” Ben blurted out, breaking the well-crafted silence and sneaking game of glances they created for the last ten minutes. Rey blinked up at him, stopping as she dried a glass. “This feels weird, I mean I’m still trying to wrap my head around the fact you are actually here. I never…”
Ben trailed off, both knowing how he’d finish the sentence, though neither were courageous to voice their shared fear.

A fear they’d never meet. Yet… there was a strange satisfaction when the fear was nonexistent and a new one appeared—did they even know how to interact outside the platforms of text, email, and phone calls? Did they even know how to be in the same space together? What if they genuinely hated each other after this experience?

“Oh,” She exhaled, her body relaxing against the counter. “I don’t blame you. I feel it too. It’s *not* us.”

“What is us?” Ben found himself asking, the question embodying several meanings.

“I don’t know.” She said honestly, setting the glass and dishtowel down. “But I know it’s not long *awkward* silences.” She stepped away from the counter, observing him from a further vantage point…standing next to each other apparently hindered their thinking. “We need to do something to get out of this *funk*…”

“Rey, I don’t know if it’s really a ‘funk’—”

“We need to insult each other, or be mean. That's how we got along in the first place.” She jutted her chin out, ready for whatever blow he'd potentially deal out.

“What? No.” Ben declined immediately, throwing the sponge in the sink. “Why the hell would I insult you? That is one of the most fucking terrible ideas you’ve ever—” Realization dawned on him at Rey smug grin. “I see what you did there.”

“Exactly, you stuffy looking nerd.” She enunciated each word slowly, trying her best to pack a punch.

“Okay, we should not judge appearances pipsqueak.” Rey yelped in indignation, her hazel eyes growing larger at the jab. Her reaction urged Ben to continue. “I thought you said you were tall? All I see is a shorty.” He stepped closer, crossing his arms over his chest.

“I am above average height for a woman!” To prove her point, she stood straighter. “Not all of us can be an intimidating gentle giant.”

“Gentle giant?” Ben repeated, unimpressed.

“It’s nearly impossible to roast you when you have the sweetest puppy dog eyes, Ben.” Rey groaned, staring up at him with a mixture of fondness and frustration.

Ben balked at her description. “I’m *menacing*. My co-workers fear me.” He defended, yet his appearance did little to support his claim. Wearing his glasses, pajama pants, and faded black hoodie, Ben embodied an overgrown college student rather than terrifying, ill-tempered editor.

“I’m sure they do. Especially when they find out your terrified of spiders.”

“I told you that in confidence.” Ben said, slouching slightly to make eye contact with her “You know what, I think this gentle giant is going to watch Netflix with his dog now.” He turned, heading towards the living area where Trixie sat patiently in her spot.

“Ben, don’t be that way. I didn’t think you’d actually be insulted.” She rushed to follow him, sitting on the open side of the couch, Trixie sitting on the cushion between her and Ben. She expected Ben to frowning, or grumpy at her petty accusation, but the budding smile said otherwise.
He found her reaction funny…a childish part of Rey wanted to be annoyed by how he pushed her buttons, but the familiarity in their banter prevented her from going further. Sure, it wasn’t exactly the same flow as when they texted each other or called…but it was inching closer to their comfortable grounds. Rey would take it. “What were you going to watch before I barged in?”

She leaned back on the couch, Trixie shifting to place her head on Rey’s thigh.

“I was debating between Parks and Rec….and nothing else.” Ben admitted sheepishly; sadly, over this little visit Rey was going to realize how mundane his life truly could be. Not that she should be surprised, he did after all spend a decent portion of his day communicating with her. “I’m not into watching horror movies on Halloween or anything.”

“You’re really not into the Halloween spirit.” She chuckled, shaking her head. “Perfect, let’s watch it.”

“Are you sure?” Ben hesitant to accept her readiness. Her eyes connected with his, her big hazel open and lively even when traced with desired sleep.

“Of course,” She answered, petting Trixie lightly. “Just because I’m here you need to drop and change whatever you’re doing. I’m the one who showed up unannounced,” She reminded Ben. “So go ahead watch what you were going to watch…I’ll be a fly on the wall.”

“I don’t think you can ever be a fly on the wall, Rey.”

She grinned fully at him...though her bright demeanor did not last long.

Twenty minutes into the episode, Rey fell asleep, the exhaustion of her travels getting the best of her. Warning signs of her sleepiness began the moment she sat down, peppered yawns and droopy eyes. Ben was stunned she sat through almost an entire episode before succumbing the clutches of sleep. Rey’s head laid propped up by the back of the couch, though her entire body slumped slightly to the right, closer to Ben. Tired from the day’s events, he wanted to go sleep in his room, but was afraid to wake up Rey. At a steady and gentle pace, he stood up from the couch. Stretching his arms and neck Ben glanced down to see Rey remained gratefully sleep.

While unsure on whether or not to take her to a guestroom, Ben decided it would be best if he left Rey on the couch.

Walking out of the living room area to the nearest light switch, he softly called for Trixie to follow him to the bedroom. Instead, the small dog harrumphed and curled tightly into Rey’s side. “Traitor,” He whispered, yet she paid little mind.

Shutting off the lights in the living room and the kitchen, Ben drowsily shuffled down the left hall to his bedroom. He nudged open the door, leaving it open in case Trixie changed her mind and slept with him or Rey needed anything. Unceremoniously, he went to bed, his mind swirling over the fact Rey was just down the hall. Staying with him for a little under a week…

“Ben…Ben…”

A rough shake of his shoulder, brought him out of his slumber. Squinting in the dark, Ben reach haphazardly for his glasses on the night stand. With lack of coordination, he shoved his glasses on,
the blurry vision of Rey becoming clear.

Rey…?

He sat up, Rey inviting herself to sit on the edge of the bed. “You left, I woke up—” She stuttered out, tucking her hair behind her ear shy. She gulped for air, and spoke with a rush of air, “I don’t do well sleeping in new places.”

“Oh,” Ben uttered out, scolding himself half a second later for his stupid remark. “I didn’t know. I would have—”

“It’s my fault, I didn’t mention it. I didn’t think I’d fall asleep.” She seemed to be scolding herself over her incontrollable fear, Ben feeling he was invading on her privacy. Ben’s hands hovered over her shoulder to pull her into a hug…yet he held back.

He dropped his hand to his side, deciding to offer his best listening ear.

Rey raked a hand through her loose hair. Ben noted her buns must had fallen out in her sleep, rarely in their video calls did he see her hair down. At some point in the night, her sweater was discarded, leaving Rey in a faded *U2 Joshua Tree* era t-shirt and her dark leggings. Her presence dozed of exhaustion and nervous tension, her arms stiffly crossed over her chest.

The panic in her eyes is what struck him.

At first glance, Rey appeared confident and well-adjusted. Normal by society’s standards. Little knew she struggled with authority, experience the occasional panic attack, and had more layers than the surface. Ben knew this well. So when she stood before him, uneased by the prospect of being in a strange house, alone…Ben knew he needed to help.

Swallowing the taste of sleep, Ben glanced at the clock. It was half past midnight…he could stay up if need be. He was able to get a couple of hours of rest, more than usual. Scooting to the empty side of the bed, Ben waved for her to take the newly opened spot.

A shadow of hesitance grazed her features. Moving to get out of bed, Ben stopped when Rey pulled back the blanket. Crawling under the covers, she mumbled an embarressed ‘thank you,’ curling to face opposite him.

"I'll stay here until you fall asleep--"

"Can you just stay here? Its easier to stay asleep when I know someone I trust is in the room." She muttered into the pillow, not interested in facing him. His lack of movement answered her plea.

Not lying down, but sitting against the headboard, Ben waited for Rey’s breathing to even. He needed to know she’s be well enough to fall back asleep, or at least relax. A man with less restraint would have done more to sooth her, yet Ben found contentment by simply being in her vicinity.

God, he was a fool.

“It was the moving around a bunch as a kid,” She explained sleepily, breaking the lull of silence. Ben strained to hear her. “Sleeping in new places kind of,” She yawned, “put me on edge. It used to be worse…but I’ve gotten better.”

“You don’t have to explain yourself. You never have to explain yourself to me. I get it.”
Ben’s eyes shifted to Rey. Unabashedly, she watched him curiously over her shoulder.

“I like explaining myself to you.”

“So I can’t really hang out today,” Ben explained as he served himself his first cup of coffee.

“I didn’t figure you would.” Rey answered biting into her toast, trying her best not to wrinkle her nose at the charred top layer. Ben had to show her how to use the damned expensive toaster twice before the contraption made her a decent slice of toast. She was going to eat it as happily as she could under the circumstances.

“Damn it.” Ben cursed glancing at his watch.

For Rey, it was oddly entertaining to watch Ben rush around, attempting to complete his morning routine. When she woke up around six in the morning, he’d already been awake for an hour. Trixie had been taken for a quick potty break and fed. Coffee was warm and waiting in the pot, and Ben was dressed in a suit and tie—

Which threw her off her morning rhythm. Logically, Rey knew Ben dressed professionally on a daily basis. He worked for a literary journal, an office, in the city…yet she’d never seen him in his work ensemble while on video call. He usually wore some off black or grey t-shirt, every once in a while a sweater added to the rotation. Seeing him cleaned up did things to her, and she honestly wanted to keep everything moderately friendly between them. Not for his sake, but for hers.

She heard enough euphemisms and innuendos from Finn throughout the week about her impending visit. Especially since she was against her trip from the beginning; he believed she needed some convincing.

“Rey this is the perfect opportunity to meet Ben. Your ticket is paid for, you’re on midterm break—you can have sex all weekend with your bizarrely handsome nerd! Why is there hesitance?”

“We would not have sex!” She objected, though the image of Ben’s abs decided to jump to the forefront of her mind.

“Fine, you’d recite poetry to each other and get horny off of it.” Finn amended, “My point is, you don’t waste opportunities like this…especially when it is with someone you deeply care about.”

Quickly, Rey realized Ben probably did not sleep much the previous night due to her intrusion (not to mention, his occasional insomnia), though he did not comment on it when she made her presence known the next morning. Possibly for both their benefit.

“I can handle being on my own.” Rey reassured him, sitting up straighter on the kitchen stool.

“I promise I’ll try to take off Friday so we can hang out.”

He plopped his satchel on the kitchen counter, double checking the manuscripts and notes he needed for the day. A light load, but knowing Ben, he scathingly tore through the work. Muttering undecipherable words to himself, he closed up his bag. Throwing his satchel over his shoulder, Ben
looked back up at Rey.

“Are you sure you will be fine?”

“Yes, yes—” Rey waved him off. “Trixie and I will have a fabulous day of bonding.” The dog barked happily by Ben’s feet at the sound of her name. “You need to leave or you will miss your train.”

“Fine, fine,” Ben held his hands up in surrender, dropping one hand to pick up his travel mug. “I’ll go. Numbers and addresses are on the fridge—call if you need anything.”

Rey stood up from her stool, gently prodding Ben out of the house. He stalked beside her down the hall to the front door, Trixie scurrying to pop inbetween them. “I’m serious. You’ve never been here before—”

“I’ve never been many places before and I have survived swimmingly.” Rey shot back, staring up at him with a stubborn grin. “I’m not a baby, Ben.”

“I know, and I’m not trying to belittle you. I know you can definitely kick my ass.” Ben said genuinely, without a hint of jest. He held Rey’s gaze as he opened the front door. “But I can’t help but feel bad that I’m not here—”

“You need to shut up and go before I do kick your ass,” Rey bit out, “I will not stand for self-deprecation or loathing while I am here.”

He flushed, the red spreading to the tips of his ears. “Fine, Lov—ugh-eh—bye!”

He shut the door forcefully behind him.

Rey spun back around to Trixie. “Is he always like this?”

Her new friend barked back.

“That’s what I thought.”

“Rey?” A voice called from further behind on the path.

After finishing her modest breakfast and burning two more pieces of toast—which she hid at the bottom of the trash—Rey decided to freshen up and take Trixie for a walk. She recalled Ben saying he went on walks with Trixie at a local park. A google search and confirmation from a neighbor, Rey and Trixie were off for a girl’s day. The crisp air reminded Rey of Ahch-To, though far more crowded, several people jogging and walking their dogs at eight in the morning.

“Hey, wait up ReyRey!”

Oh, shit. Only one person called her the horrid nickname.

Ordering Trixie to halt, Rey turned to the charming face of Poe Dameron. She forgot her former friend lived in the area and was dating Ben’s godmother. Seeing him a few feet away brought a long lost wave of spiteful emotions. Theoretically, letting go and moving on seemed to be an accessible option, yet Rey found it difficult to practice the act with Poe in the equation.

“Hey, buddy!” She forced out cheerfully, her fake smile a little too bright to be completely
believable.

Of course, the charismatic dimwit did not see her strain.

“I knew it was you. I’d notice those little knots anywhere.” He joking bopped the middle bun lining her head. She clamped her mouth shut, suppressing harsh words. She did not like being touched in general—unless it was from a certain tall nerd, as Finn would say—and she especially despised when her three buns were bopped or bumped. “What are you doing here?” He stood taller, subconsciously puffing out his chest.

For as long as Rey knew Poe, he’d been insecure about their height difference—specifically the lack of, the two able to stand toe-to-toe and eye-to-eye. Briefly, she wondered how he stood beside Amilyn. She knew from Ben’s account, Amilyn Holdo was above average height—willowy—were his words.

“Visiting a friend, walking his dog.” Glancing down at the miniature schnauzer, she noticed the girl happily sniffing Poe.

“Oh! I know you.” He cooed, dropping into a crouch. Tiltling his head back, he allowed Trixie to lap kisses on to his chin. Looking up at the sky, Rey rolled her eyes; he just had to charm Ben’s dog. Trixie was her friend, not Poe’s. Mid—chuckle, he gently patted the dog away. “Wait, how do you…,” He stood up, his face pinched in thought. “Ben—Ben Solo is your friend?”

“Yes,” She tugged lightly on the leash. “We’ve been friends for a while—”

“But you guys are close enough, that you’d fly across the country to visit him?”

“Well, when you put it that way—”

“You two must be the best-est friends; Finn must be taking it pretty hard.” Poe nodded in earnest pity for his ex-boyfriend.

“Oh,” Rey’s eyes widened in false sadness, Poe eating it up. “Finn is absolutely devastated he no longer holds the title as my best friend.” She stressed, fighting off the urge to be annoyed with him.

Poe Dameron had charm, a selfless bleeding heart…but he was fucking oblivious.

For the majority of the week Rey had been pestered about Ben and her feelings for him by everyone. Finn, Rose, Leia, Han, and even Chewie of all people, made an effort to discuss Ben with her. She began to believe everyone saw her massive crush except for Ben himself.

“How are you liking the East Coast, ReyRey?” Poe asked, easing into a jog beside her.

“It’s a little colder, but I haven’t seen much. I got in last night.” Rey forced her best surface level small talk.

“You should convince Ben to show you around.” His eyes lit up, “Or better yet, Amilyn and I will take you two out! Ben canceled on us last week.” Rey knew this; Ben ranted about Poe and his ‘too cool attitude’ for a steam of texts before she told him to just cancel the dinner and reschedule. He felt bad about canceling on his godmother, but Rey assured him Amilyn probably did not take it to heart.

Understandably, Rey forgot Poe was relentless.

“Oh, I don’t think Ben—”
“What better time to make up for it while you’re in town!” Poe pick up his pace, checking his watch. “I got to go ReyRey, but it was great seeing you.” He jogged ahead before shouting over his shoulder, “You’re number’s still the same?” She vaguely nodded. “Great, I’ll text you!”

She watched him disappear ahead on the path.

The nice little bubble she and Ben shared was sadly thinning. Rey felt defenseless, in the oddest sense of the word.

“I’m sorry Mr. Ren, am I boring you?” Hux growled.

Ben jumped at the mention of his name, feeling the eyes of his fellow editors. He, Hux, Phasma, and the newly minted editor Qi’ra were gathered to discuss their submission for the next issue. Needless to say, Ben was bothered by the recent Qi’ra development, the woman making the illogical jump from Head of the Sales to Editor. Snoke insisted on the promotion, claiming the woman had more than proved her worth, and blatantly ignored her previous sexual harassment claim.

From the corner of his eyes, Ben saw Phasma raise an eyebrow, highly amused by his dumbfounded expression.

“Of course not Hux,” He cleared his throat, “Continue.”

“Actually, I need to use the little ladies room. A break would be great,” Qi’ra spoke up, the three other editors turning sour at the mention of another break. This was her third one in two hours, the meeting steadily falling behind schedule every time she was gone for ten to fifteen minutes.

The moment their new editor was out of ear shot, Phasma squinted at Qi’ra’s empty seat darkly. “I bet you anything she’s sleeping with one of the donors. That’s how she got this job.”

“Phas!”

“Gwen!”

Both Ben and Hux called out, though the woman did not seem bothered by their scandalized cries.

“Oh, grow up, you twats.” Phasma stood up and crossed to the Keurig machine in the corner of the room. Picking up one of the pristine white mugs hanging against the wall, she turned back to Ben and Hux. “She is under qualified. Never finished her degree, and thought the abstract was the actual piece. She’s no doubt a fucking puppet.” Phasma reasoned, the two men in the room falling silent.

“Gwen, I don’t think—” Hux began though Phasma’s sharp gaze stopped him.

“Whether we like to admit it or not, our journal is sinking.”

“Is now really the best time?” Ben twirled his pen, tapping his phone’s home button with his free left hand. Still no messages.

He was being paranoid; Rey could handle herself just fine. As far as he knew, she wasn’t planning on leaving the house.

“Oh, my bad that our journal’s downfall is getting in the way of your school girl romance.” Hux
rolled his eyes, earning disapproving looks from both Ben and Phasma. “What? You don’t think this girl is a distraction?”

“She’s a friend.” Ben shoved his phone into his suit pocket, embarrassment twinging in his gut. Though considered some of his oldest friends, Phasma and Hux knew little of Rey. Hux sneered at the mention of girl, claiming there must have been something off about her to keep in contact with Ben so long without ever meeting face to face. On the other hand, Phasma loved when Ben brought her up, smiling fondly.

“I think she is wonderful.” Phasma declared as she pressed the button for her afternoon coffee. Her eyes narrowed on Hux, “You just don’t like her because she is another Brit in Ben’s life and you cannot stand the thought.” She jested to her on and off again partner.

The ginger’s face twisted into a mild scowl. Opening his folder, he frowned down at the contents. None of the editors were pleased with the essays and pieces pushed upon them. Despite being the initial spokesman for Snoke as editor-in-chief, Hux grew a foul distaste for the scarred man. Snoke controlled with an iron fist, and had his Praetorian Circle sift through the incoming essays before anyone else. All the potential writers for the journal thrown away into the unknown; the thought made all three editor wary of the journal they worked under. “Ben, please tell me you are still looking for Vader’s heir.”

Ben froze, his jaw clenching. “Yes…but I’m running into dead ends.” Observing Phasma and Hux, he became relived neither caught his shadow of a lie. Glancing over his shoulder to the glass door —no Qi’ra in sight— Ben leaned forward. “Have…have either of you considered leaving?”

“Yes.”

“No.”

The couple openly glared at one another, Phasma winning the stare down a second in. She primly picked up her finished coffee, taking her seat across from Ben once more. “Of course we have,” She lowered her voice, “especially with our newest addition, but we can’t.”

“The contract.” Ben murmured in understanding.

“Unless we get fired,” Hux threw out into their discussion, “and that’s almost as bad as staying. Imagine the blackballing we’d all get. We’d never work in this industry again.”

“How about starting our own literary journal?” Ben spoke quickly, Phasma’s eyes blowing wide, while Hux’s jaw dropped at his proposal.

“Ben, have you lost your goddamned—”

“Did you all move ahead with the meeting?” Qi’ra’s voice floated from the doorway. She smirked at them, taking a seat next to Phasma. The three remained silent, seeing who’d be the first to crack under the pressure. Their new editor noticed the awkwardness. “Oh, please don’t stop chit-chatting on my account. Who has lost their mind about what?”

“Ren…” Hux huffed out. Across from him, Phasma inspecting every twitch of Hux’s jaw for a foul move. “…has lost his mind about his girlfriend.”

If Ben could kill with a look, Hux would be further than dead. He’d be a decayed body.

“He loved the girl so much, he does not know when to shut up about her,” Hux continued to babble. A rough kick to his shins from Phasma shut him up immediately.
Qi’ra’s eyes twinkled with mischief focusing solely on Ben. “Kylo, I had no idea you were taken.”

“Yup,” Ben choked out, avoiding entire table’s gaze.

“What’s her name Kylo? I must know who snatched the heart of our cold hearted little boy.” She smiled fully through her twisted compliment. Tempted to verbally degrade the woman, Ben bit hard on the inside of his cheek.

“Her name’s Rey,” Phasma supplied before Ben could get word in the conversation. “Beautiful young woman, captured our Kylo’s heart the moment he laid his eyes on her.” Phasma was unaware of the truthfulness of her statement.

Suddenly feeling awkward under the gaze of his colleagues, Ben ducked his head down.

“Awe, he’s bashful.” She remarked teasingly, though a bitter edge in her tone. “What’s this?” Qi’ra’s perfectly manicured hand reached for Ben’s folder, plucking the thicker, red inked-marked manuscript from the rest of the fold. “King of Nothing,” Ben blood ran cold, the familiar title ringing in his ears. “I don’t think this was approved by the Praetorian Circle.” Qi’ra tutted, pursing her lips in disapproval.

Unkindly, Ben snatched the manuscript from her hands. In a quick motion, he tucked the papers in his satchel, not breathing until he knew the piece was safely put away. He gulped, adjusting his tie to distract himself from the startled faces of Phasma, Hux, and Qi’ra.

How did a copy of Rey’s nonfiction piece get mixed with his other manuscripts? The previous afternoon he’d been rereading her piece, Ben interested in helping her build upon the foundation of the essay. Maybe once the writing and structure was fine-tuned, encourage Rey to submit the essay for publication at a few journals, or enter it in a contest. He must have tossed it with the rest of his belongings in the morning during his rush put of the house.

“Its…” The three blinked at him suspiciously. “An old manuscript from a friend. Nothing to worry about.” He sent a warning glare. “Let’s continue with our meeting.”

“You’ve never seen Roman Holiday?” Ben gaped at Rey.

The young woman jumped at his thunderous voice. “I never felt the urge, it is an older film.”

“Therefore, you must watch it.” He declared swiping the remote from her grasp.

They once again found themselves sitting on the couch surfing through Netflix. This time Rey was wide awake and a pizza box sat open on the coffee table. She insisted dinner would be on her and the easiest and quickest option was a large pizza pie from a local pizzeria. Ben was simply happy she did not try to cook; he heard enough kitchen horror stories from Rey to last a lifetime.

Strangely enough, while they struggle to speak to one another the previous day, the two fell into a nice rhythm once Ben came back from work. Talking about their day flowed into their natural banter. Ben felt warm satisfaction at witnessing Rey’s grimace when he brought up Qi’ra, she seemingly disliked the woman even less after Ben explain the harassment claim he filed a couple of years back. Rey mentioned the dog park, she too feeling a sense of validation at Ben’s eye roll when she brought up Poe Dameron. From there, Ben and Rey were able to fall back into comfortable conversation, the physical presence of the other no longer as intimidating.
Maybe they just needed a day to themselves to process the last twenty-four hours.

“I thought we were going to watch *Firefly.*”

“Another time, you need to see one of the greatest classic films of the previous century.”

“I highly doubt that.” Rey remarked as she burrowed further into the warm, wool blanket commandeered as her own.

“You don’t like classic films?” Ben blinked owlishly at her, his glasses slipping a little down his nose.

“I never really saw the point of watching black and white films. I don’t understand the nostalgia —”

“It’s not about the ‘nostalgia’,” Ben caught on the word, “I don’t give a fuck about nostalgia. It’s the *story.*” He was fully turned to her, hunched a bit to make eye contact with her.

“You mean a *sexist* story.” Rey shrugged, tucking her blanket closer to her chin. “I never understood films from that era because they were awfully sexist and portrayed women through the male gaze.”

“And literature does not do the same?” Ben countered, knowing Rey’s investment was in novels and books rather than movies. “You can say the same thing about the literature of the era.”

“But I can change interpretation in literature—it isn’t always the case with film.” She explained, looking back at him expectantly.

Ben held her gaze, a small smile pressing upon his lips the longer he was in their little world, “Please, just give *Roman Holiday* a chance. I think you’d really like it; it’ll appeal to you romanticism.”

“I think you’ve mistaken me for yourself.” Rey murmured, but agreed to watch the film he was so adamant about.

Enraptured by the final scene, Ben flinched when he heard a tiny sniffle from beside him. Face red with silent tears, Rey watched with fierce intensity as Ann finally made it Joe in the line of reporters.

A smug part of Ben wanted taunt her, claiming an ‘I told you so,’ yet seeing her distraught over the ending…Ben knew wat she meant the previous day. It was nearly impossible to mock someone when they possessed the sweetest, most honest eyes.

Carefully, he brought his arm over the back of the couch as an unspoken offering. Sensing him, Rey turned to lean against his side.

“It’s…It’s…” She hastily wiped her eyes with her fingers. Gently, he ran his hand up and down her arm comfortingly. “Why—Why couldn’t they figure out a way to *stay* with each other?”

“Because she had her life and responsibilities, and he had his.”

“Thank god, life is nothing like the movies.” She said, her voice muffled by the fabric of his t-shirt. Ben hummed in agreement.
If this chapter felt awkward at times, then it did its goal. They are awkward nerds trying their best to avoid the sexual tension while also being idiots thinking the other doesn't like them.

And yeah, I did the trope where they 'share a bed'-- but Ben never went back to sleep after she came to his room. He's somewhat of a gentleman.

On another note, I do like Qi’ra somewhat but I needed some one to be a necessary evil and it worked with her.

Let me know what you think; I love discussing the fic with my readers! Comments and kudos are always appreciated.

Follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
Dudes, I can't write a summary for this chapter.

Typos will be fixed throughout the week. Also, I've never been to New York but know plenty who have, so most of this is vague and based off of half-assed research. Sorry, not sorry--setting not the main focal point in this. Reylo is.

Enjoy :D

After living away from the city life for five years, Rey almost forgot how it felt to take the underground—or the subway as America’s preferred to call it. The moment she made it into the city area, the New York suburbia long gone, Rey felt her body work on autopilot. Pushing along the crowd, being alert, walking with purpose to her destination. All the noises and voices reminded Rey her love of the quiet, small town life. Bouncing around from city, to country, to all in between she’d grown to love the community aspect of Ach-To. A place where she knew the people, the cashier at the grocery store or her neighbor down the hall who own the floral shop on 7th street. This little facts made her home special; it made her home, home. With these nameless face passing by, Rey felt old childhood loneliness. These emotions were quelled by the thought of who she made this trek to see.

Double checking the address in her tiny notebook, Rey continued her journey through Brooklyn, knowing the literary journal’s offices were not too deep in the borough.

As decided the previous afternoon, Ben was taking a half day at work. The two were going out for a late lunch, Rey insisting she’d go and meet him at his office. He’d been initially hesitant to let Rey go alone, then completely shut is mouth when she reminded him she was highly capable to care for herself. She’d been doing so for nearly all her life.

Only to herself would she admit to liking someone fretting over her, caring about her well-being.

Coming up to the building with First Order Literary’s offices, Rey took a moment to collect herself. Sure, the journal had its issues, Rey knowing more than any outside should, yet these circumstances did not deter the acclaim attached to its name. Several writers caught their first breaks in the industry with this journal…and she’d be stepping into their offices.

Fourteen year old Rey would have passed out at the mere thought.

Opening the heavy door, Rey entered the building. The sleek lobby housed a few chairs and directory of offices in the building. Overall, relatively empty except for the building receptionist and an exceptionally tall, platinum blonde woman waiting by the elevator. Rey crossed the distance to the elevator, standing near the woman. At her proximity, Rey could smell her sharp, fragrant perfume and the lines of stress on her forehead.

The woman did not spare Rey a glance, consumed with her notepad. Left slanted handwriting decorated the lined pages.
After a moment, the elevator dinged, the reflective doors opening. Both women entered the empty lift, the taller of the two pressing the button for the twelfth floor. “What floor?” She asked, Rey recognizing a faded English accent from her.

“Oh, twelfth floor.” She answered, noticing how the woman eyed her oddly.

“How interns are only allowed to the twelfth floor by request.” She stated, eyes lingering on Rey’s casual attire. Her old converse, skinny jeaned capris, and loose The Cure Kiss Me Lips t-shirt caused her to stick out like a sore thumb. Quickly, she shrugged on her green cargo jacket, hoping to appear less…young.

“I’m not an intern. My friend works as an editor.” She explained hastily, standing a bit taller as she cuffed the sleeves of her jacket. “Just visiting.”

“And who’s your friend?” The woman said with a regal air of curiosity.

Rey frowned, unsure of how to proceed with the sudden inquisition. “Uh, Kylo Ren.”

“Ben?”

“Yeah.” Rey brightened up at the mention of his name. The other woman’s cagey demeanor lifted away instantaneously.

“Then you must be Rey.”

“How do you—”

“Ben doesn’t know how to shut up about you.” The woman gushed with a smug grin. She then held out her hand to Rey. “Gwen Phasma.”

The name clicked in Rey’s memory; Phasma had been colleagues and friends since college. She was the one dating, or had been dating, Hux.

“Ah, hi.” Rey grasped Phasma’s hand, giving her a firm handshake. “Nice to meet you.”

“The pleasure is truly all mine.” She countered, dropping their handshake. “Ben didn’t mention you’d be stopping by the office.”

Rey shrugged a shoulder. “It was a last minute thing. Basically, I forced it upon him and he couldn’t say ‘no’.”

“He needs some good old fashion peer pressure sometimes. You did well.” Phasma complimented.

The elevator pinged on the tenth floor, a flustered, dark haired young woman entering with several files piled in her arms.

“Do you need help there, Paige?” Phasma’s questioned, ending with a light chuckle.

“Oh.” Her face flushed under the taller woman’s gaze. “N-No. I’m great.” She smiled boldly to Phasma before shuffling to the left of Rey. “Can someone press—wait, I know you!” Paige’s eyes latched on to Rey, finally taking in the young woman’s appearance. Rey flinched at the sudden accusation. “Sorry, but you look exactly like my sister’s friend Rey.”

“Sister—your name’s Paige?” Rey asked, the name sounding familiar. Didn’t Rose have a sister…? The elevator pinged for the twelfth floor. Slowly, the three women exited the compartment. “As in Paige Tico?”
“Yes!” The struggling woman cheered, setting the files down on the first available counter space. “Wait a minute, what are you doing here? Rose mentioned you were visiting some guy you love,” Phasma’s eyes widened, leaning in closer to hear more. Meanwhile Rey’s face continued to burn the longer Paige recounted her sister’s account of ‘Rey’s love affair.’ “—like a true romance novel! I mean you go girl, it takes major balls to fly out and see a guy you’ve never even truly met and declare your love—”

“Rey, you’re early.” Ben spoke up from behind Paige, completely unaware of the topic of discussion.

“Holy shit!” Paige clapped a hand over her mouth. She turned her head to Rey, “You know Ben—oh, he’s the—”

“Paige!” Phasma interrupted. A sultry smile played on her lips, she picking up half the stack of files Paige brought. “Did you pick up that one file for me?”

“Of course, the one on Qi’r—”

“Let’s go discuss it in my office.” Phasma led the woman away, Ben watching with confusion while Rey finally exhaled her head breath.

“Who knew Paige turned to putty around Phasma?”

“Crushes make people do weird things.” Rey shrugged, trying her best not to think how she basically flew across the country to spend time with Ben, knowing he’s only be able to spare a couple of hours a day. She was honestly ridiculous…

“Oh, yeah I know.” He smiled hesitantly, almost missing it if she blinked half a second too soon. His crooked smile caused her heart to stutter; okay, maybe she wasn’t ridiculous. Ben shook his head. “Um, I need to drop off the final draft of this month’s issue at Hux’s office,” He waved the inconspicuous folder in his right hand. “You can, just wait in my office; the door should be open. We’ll be able to leave in about ten minutes.” He jutted his thumb to the door he just exited out of, his meek assistant typing away at the desk just outside his private office.

His free hand rose, as though to pat her on the shoulder, but dropped down mid-way. Biting down the bubbling nerves in her stomach, Rey reached for his left hand, grasping it lightly. She immediately noticed how much larger his hands were compared to her own. Calloused pads of his fingers were the second detail she accounted, unable to help the wave of heat inside her.

“Sounds good,” She said, hoping she didn’t sound too breathy.

Ben nodded mutely, squeezing her hand back. And then didn’t let go, the two peaking at each other through the corner of their eyes. Another half-smile worked its way to his lips, then his eyes, Rey biting her lips together shyly.

“My god, stop being a blushing school girl, Ren!” A gingered haired man, presumably Hux, called out from an office a couple of doors down. A few of the proofers in the rows of cubicles turned their heads at the editor’s shout, then looking back at the man mentioned. Embarrassed, Ben released Rey’s hand, his lips down turning into a grimace. “I need that draft.” Hux continued to grumble, entering his office once more.

“Go,” Rey shooed, the first to step away from their little bubble. “I’ll be in your office.”

She turned on her heel, heading to the door he indicated. Quickly, she glanced back at Ben—he’d been watching her walk away. Ducking her head back down, Rey waved to Ben’s assistant. The
young man regarded her with wide eyes, surprised she—or possibly anyone—would be visiting Ben. Eyeing his name plate, she repeated the name in her mind before speaking it aloud.

“Hello Mitaka,” She addressed before entering Ben’s office, the young man’s worried creases lessening at her greeting.

Surprisingly, Ben’s office did not reflect the rest of First Order Literary’s main office aesthetic. While the main area was of monochromatic colors and off-hues of beige, his office was warmer. Smaller—cozy, even, though Rey was not sure if anyone who did not know Ben in the capacity she did would ever associate the word with the man. Simply, his office was not what she expected of an editor’s office.

Instead of a smooth, metal desk, a well maintained cedar wood desk sat towards the center of the room. A short book shelf with general copies of dictionaries and grammar books sat lined up neatly, though they were well used. Bookmarks and blue sticky-notes decorated the tops of the books, deep red cursive etched into the flimsy paper. A simple cabinet sat behind his desk, miscellaneous office supplies littered the counter’s surface. Stepping further into the room, she noticed the lack of pictures or personal items on his desk or walls.

Except for one, sitting tucked between two cleverly angled file organizers; a younger, college aged Ben with…with Skywalker of all people. Ben looked…he looked undeniably troubled. Deep bags rested under his eyes, his thin wired glasses at the time doing nothing to hide his fatigue. Beside him, Skywalker appeared no better. Long weary eyes and a fake smile made the photo seem distorted to the eye. These men were miserable; in life and in each other’s presense…Rey wondered if the uncle and nephew’s separation was causing more good than harm, her initial opinions wrong.

Yet Skywalker seemed broken at the thought of his nephew. From what, Rey did not know.

She tore her eyes away from the photo, focusing on anything else in the room. In her search, her eyes landed on the opposite wall. Hanging in the middle was a writer’s manifesto written in elegant calligraphy —

>This pen is a weapon of a writer. Not as clumsy or random as our loose mouths or our reckless, untrained thoughts. An elegant weapon for a more civilized age.

• Benjamin W. Kenobi

Rey smiled up at the quote; she had the same words copied into the front page of every notebook she owned since she discover the man’s works. The quote was from a thirty odd year old classroom recording; splotchy film and the sound echo-y in the YouTube upload of the recording, yet it remained the only relic of the praised class. Kenobi spoke with a few students at a creative writing seminar of the importance of writing, and maintaining writing even when the soul desired to give up.

“The man was quiet the recluse in his later years. Mad man they say.” A hollow, raspy voice spoke.

Rey spun around to find an older, balding man standing by the open door. A twisted scar stretched across his left cheek, contrasting with his carefully immaculate attire. Black suit, polish black shoes, and a ghastly thick gold tie.

She blinked, reaching to adjust her glasses higher on the bridge of her nose. “Oh, I know. But I find him to be brilliant no mater his need to be recluse in his old age. I don’t blame him for seeking
solitude.” She defended her favorite author.

He chuckled mockingly, “Child, you speak as though he were still alive. Man’s been long dead for a little under a decade.”

Rey, bit the inside of her cheek, though it did not help hinder her rebuttal. “Well, to me he is.” The old man sneered at her apparent naivety. “All authors are; through their writing they remain immortal.”

“Such rose-colored lens you live in.” Rey clenched her jaw at the blatant insult. He stepped forward, Rey becoming alert to his proximity. She stepped back, eyeing the man levelly. “Tell me, what is a young woman like yourself doing in our most esteemed editor’s office?”

“I—”

“Now, I understand a spineless man such as Ren must struggle to find companionship—”

“Excuse me, its one thing to insult my intelligence, but to insult B-Ren’s—” Rey stumbled over his names, remembering his pen name. His birth name was used exclusively for close friends and family. “—character. He is—”

“Mr. Snoke,” Ben’s firm baritone sounded in the room, Rey lifting her eyes away from the shrewish man to him. Ben remained by the door, holding it open for Snoke. “If I recall correctly we do not have a meeting scheduled today, and I do not appreciate unannounced visitors.” His terse tone sent unpleasant shiver down Rey’s spine, the young woman crushingly reminded of his tamed anger…or of his possibly untamed aggression.

“Ah,” Snoke muttered, stepping towards the door and away from Rey “I see. Well, then I will take the matter to Qi’ra. She seems to be the one dedicated to our cause—”

“You mean producing a diverse and high quality literary journal?” Ben interrupted, picking up his light coat draped over the chair closest to the door. He shrugged it on. In the moment, Ben possessed an air of confidence Rey had only ever seen his mother performed with great proficiency. “Because I think she might be more interested in other matters as she was not present for our editor’s meeting and has not signed off on the final draft.” He then crossed to his desk, picking up his packed up satchel. “And the draft is due for printing in a half hour, as we have maxed out our extension privileges thanks to our newest addition.” Ben remarked, a smirk turned frown playing on his lips.

Mr. Snoke huffed deeply, eying Ben sternly. “Watch yourself, young Ren.”

He stalked out of the room, both Rey and Ben waiting until he was completely out of ear shot to address each other.

Ben crossed over to her in two long strides. “Did he say anything offensive—”

“That’s the dipshit you have to work for?”

Ben guffaw, his mouth breaking into a brief, wide smile. He looked away, eyes trained on the ground. “I’m sorry. I usually don’t laugh like that—”

“I love it when you laugh like that.” She said quietly like she admitted the greatest secret in the world. And maybe to her it was; Ben’s laughter he only shared for a few. She liked being the few in Ben’s life.
“Then I’ll do it more.” He stated boldly, himself seemingly astonished he spoke up at all. “But just for you. Can’t let the whole world know I actually find humor in life.”

“Of course,” Rey nodded dramatically, “Can’t let the world know the nasty Kylo Ren shortles at blunt curses. His reputation would be ashes.”

His deep laughter sounded again, Rey knowing for sure she was the cause of his joy.

“I could take you to any restaurant you desire, and you decide on hots dogs with everything on the Brooklyn Bridge.”

Ben turned his head to Rey, his lips quirking in amusement. He caught her mid-bite, mustard and ketchup smeared on her upper lip.

“Yup!” She stuck her tounge out, trying to reach for any lingering condiments around her mouth. Realizing she was failing, she snatched a napkin in the little space between them on the bench and wiped her mouth. “I’m a cheap date.” She took another mouthful, humming as she chewed.

“Yeah, don’t tell people that.” Ben folded down some of the foil his hot dog was encased in. He ate small bite, attempting not to make a mess.

She rolled her eyes, observing what was left of her meal. “Not that it matters. I don’t really date.”

“I figured.” He said after a swallow.

“Hey!” She wacked his arm with the back of her left hand.

“I just meant,” He frowned, picking out a stray onion. Rey plucked it from his hand, adding it to her own hot dog. “You’re a busy person. School, work, writing, and volunteering. It’s like you’re a freaking Disney princess.” He picked up the soda between them, taking a sip. Rey picked up a cherry-cola at one of the bodegas on their way to the bridge. He swore he wouldn’t drink it, claiming he wasn’t thirsty. Yet here they were, half way through eating and he’d been the one to drink most of the bottle.

“Never refer to me as a princess,” Rey cringed, “I’m by no means a princess.”

“Then a ‘very nice and pretty scavenger’, happy?” He glanced at her. Rey’s nose scrunched, not completely pleased with the compromise, but shrugging in approval.

“Sure, as long as I get to refer to you as a prince.” She negotiated, popping the last bit of her hot dog in her mouth. The foil made a distinct crinkle-crunch as she crumpled it in her right hand.

Quietly, she observed the pedestrians on the bridge. Some tourist lingered here and there, along with the occasional jogger passing by, though her eyes were focused on tall building across the way.

“Would you ever want to live here?” He asked, hope peaking in his chest at the prospect.

“Nope. Never.” She answered without a second thought. Her words were sharp and sure, cutting into any frivolous ideas dancing around Ben’s heart. Rey glanced at Ben, sensing the waves of disappointment from him. “I don’t like the city life. It’s interesting to watch, but it’s not for me….” She eyed him curiously. “Would you want to live here forever?”
“I…sure.” He exhaled, the word hallow.

Rey squeezed her eyes shut, before opening them once more. Her lips pursed in thought. “Oddly enough, I can picture you anywhere, but here.”

“Why would you say that?” Ben asked, finding the statement presumptuous. He lived in the New York area for a little under a decade; he knew the city enough—the subway routes and times, the bodegas closest to his office and apartment, and which restaurants were open late for his midnight dinner after a long day at work. He survived the week, until he visited his mother on the weekends, helping her with her small garden. He played with Trixie, hoping one day he’d be able to move elsewhere where he’d be able to keep her with him…maybe with a decent yard. Like the one he had while growing up.

Then again, he thought of his apartment as temporary, and his commute to his mother’s house as temporary. In fact with the state of First Order Literary and his knowledge of his grandfather, his entire life in New York seemed to be on a timer.

“You’re not a city boy, Ben.” Rey answered with a twinge of exasperation at his silence.

He crossed his arms of his chest, feeling his hackle’s rise. “And how do you know?”

“Because why would you spend so much time at your mother’s home in the suburbs or in the solitude of your apartment, when you have an entire city at your disposal?” She asked earnestly, giving him her full attention.

“I don’t know, and I don’t have an answer for you.” He said truthfully, finding himself incapable of lying to her. For some reason, she brought out his honesty. He blamed his open book attitude to her doe eyes; those eyes welcomed him with undeserving comfort.

Not as disappointed by his answer as he expected, Rey hummed in understanding. Thankfully, she did not press the issue. In companionable silence, the two sat, neither feeling the urge to move.

A subtle breeze brushed from their left. Shivering at the sudden coolness in the air, Rey shifted closer to Ben, muttering a choppy phase along the lines of ‘You’re a bloody furnace.’ Sadly, Ben was unable to decipher, her voice muffled by her the collar of her jacket. She leaned into his side, resting her head on his shoulder. Over the past few days, Ben gradually became accustomed to Rey’s touches. Tucking close to his side, patting his hair away from his face, resting her head on his shoulder, the occasional hand hold. He tried not to think too hard about these gestures, working it up to friendly affection—no matter how much he hoped it was more sentimental than friendship.

Loose strands of her hair tickled his face, Ben turning his head away from the direction of the wind, his gaze lifted the clouding afternoon sky. He forgot the last time he took the time to look up at the sky…it must have been years since he’d been star gazing. More than ten years at the least, the stars impossible to see with the city lights. Maybe deep down, he’d always be that small town guy.

Sighing, Ben nudged Rey. “I know this coffee place nearby, you want to go?”

She perked up at the mention of caffeine, a sense of glee filling her being. “Absolutely.”

The two gathered their trash and belongings before heading back the way they came. Walking beside him, Rey’s left hand reached for his right. Without overthinking, Ben clasped her hand in his.

Their walk became a languid stroll, neither prepared to release.
“I swear, if your apartment is not amazing, those five flights of stairs were for shit.” Rey huffed as she took the last few steps on the stairs.

The two spent longer than either anticipated at the coffee house, sitting down and just talking about everything and anything. Amongst these were: the outlook on the rest of her semester, what’s really going on with Phasma and Hux (apparently, another break), their favorite seasons (he liked autumn and she the spring; neither were surprised), his parents (he thought they were idiots, she thought it was both idiotic and romantic; they didn’t argue after that), and people watched for a good hour, coming up with various scenarios as to how people knew each other. Ben claimed it was a writing exercise, while Rey knew he just wanted to play pretend and judge with someone else. She didn’t complain, especially when she came up with content rivaling the greatest comics.

They didn’t end up leaving until a quarter past seven, taking the subway back to his apartment as Ben needed to prove his point once again about a novel they began arguing about as they left the coffee house.

“The elevator occasionally works; just not this week.” Ben explained as they continued down the hall to his apartment. His was towards the end, next to one of the electrical units. Not the best location overall in the building, as there were maintenance men working by his front door for half of both the winter and summer months, yet he liked it well enough.

“I thought you were some high and mighty editor; why do you live in a building with an elevator that barely works?” She asked, genuinely curious.

Ben frowned down at her, stopping a few feet away from his door. “How much do you think I make?”

Rey bit her lips together, thinking hard. “A month or a year?”

“A year.” Ben confirmed.

“I don’t know. I’m not going to guess, arsehole.”

“I-I’m flattered you think I make enough to live somewhere else,” he said with , Rey face scrunching up as she tried to figure the numbers. Ben decided to save her the trouble. “But you know, money gets eaten up. Paying off student loans, necessities, other bills. Let’s not forget insurance on both myself and my car—”

“Why the hell do you even own a car? You live in the city.” Rey interrupted, her brain hurting from all responsibilities he was throwing at her.

“I grew up in California where I pretty much had to drive everywhere. I like having the security of a car.” He shrugged, turning to his apartment door. “Long story short; I live decently and within my means. Unlike my mother who runs off on random vacations.” He muttered under his breath as he shoved his key into the door’s lock. Rey’s lips turned up a bit at his remark, knowing fully well how frivolous Leia could be; which seemed to be the complete opposite of both her son and ex-husband. Rey was sure if someone stuck Han out into the wilderness, he’d never leave; he’d make his own house from scratch and live out in solitude with little trouble. His son seemed similar, with how he made it out in the city with little help when he became estranged to his family.

“I never really thought about…I don’t know, the job market after college. I figure I have enough skills I can work wherever and do writing on the side until I got something published.” She
commented with little commitment, for once realizing some of the realities of the professional world.

“Like a book?” Ben asked as he opened the door. “Because I am all for that, but you need to turn in other pieces to different magazines and websites in the meantime.” He reminded her, sounding more like Ben-the-Mentor, than Ben-the…Ben-the-she-was-not-sure-what-to-call-their-relationship.

Ben stepped back and allowed Rey to enter his apartment first, “It’s not perfect, but it close to work and had built-in bookshelves.” He said as he closed the door behind him.

On the wall of the short entryway, was a small chest high alcove—just the right size to fit a tall rotary phone—with a key dish on its ledge. Ben helped her shrug off her jacket, hanging it with his own on the slim coat tree tucked in the corner.

“So that’s what you were thinking when you were looking for apartments—‘it must have built-in bookshelves’?” She joked, pivoting around to face him, only to bump into his firm chest. Her mind flew to the fleeting image of his abs etched into her mind. Chuckling to relieve the coiled tension in her gut, Rey paced back towards the living area.

“No, I just got lucky.” He said as he moved past her to flick up the light switch. A warm hue brighten the room ahead, casting disfigured shadows down the entryway.

Following behind him, Rey stopped in her tracks at the sight of his living room. “Oh my god, you live in a fucking library!” She rushed forward to the nearest bookshelf with delight, eyes devouring the array of books lining his walls. When Ben said ‘built-in book shelves,’ Rey honestly thought maybe one or two. Not three walls worth of the living room, along with a reading nook by the window. No wonder he never left home; she wouldn’t either.

Stepping away from what seemed to be his sci-fi collection, Rey’s eyes roved over the rest of the living area, finding more Ben in this room than any of the places they’d been. Off to the left, closer to the entry way was a small kitchen—the one where he must have taught her how to cook homemade macaroni and cheese. A dining table was pushed against the half-wall separating the kitchen from the living room, stacks of notebooks and papers sitting in the middle.

“I wouldn’t call it a library…” Ben spoke up from the other side of the room, looking for a specific book amongst his stacks. “More like a… reading room.”

“You can’t call your entire apartment a ‘reading room’.”

He made a noise of disagreement from the back of his throat. “I can call it whatever I want.”

She crossed to another section, finding Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters’ smushed together, each spine creased with periodic use. Lifting her gaze to the shelf eye level, she found Dickens lined up neatly…and possibly by publication order. Ben might have been more than extensive in his care.

“You…love reading.” She said, astonished.

“It’s kind of what I do for a living.” Ben quipped, a book held in his hand.

Rey scoffed, crossing her arms as she faced Ben. “No, I mean…everyone has a great love affair in their life that is not an actual physical human being.”

He titled his head, amused by her thought. “Okay…I’ll buy it…”
“Mine is tinkering, fixing little things here and there.” She explained bashfully, revealing a part of herself she never really spoke aloud before. “I can take something apart and put back together over and over and never become tired of it.” She uncrossed her arms, feeling more comfortable the longer she spoke. “I genuinely love doing that, to the point I will buy useless tools—you don’t even want to know how many power drills I have locked away at your father’s shop.” She shook her head feeling his eyes zeroing in on her—seeing her deeper than her physical presence. “I’m trying to say, yours is reading; you’d think you’d be sick of it because it is what you do for a living, but no you live in a ‘reading room’.”

“I never knew you love tinkering.” He mumbled, dropping his gaze down the blue, hard cover book in his hand.

“That’s all you got from my ramble?” Ben didn’t answer, biting his lips together as he tapped his fingers against the cover of the thick book. “Whats wrong with you?” She laughed through her nose.

Ben placed the book down on the shelf behind him, lying flat just above his eye level. Nervously, he wiped his clammy hands on his slacks. “I…I want to know so much about you, because I feel like these past couple days we’re in this weird intimate friendship, but we are still trying to figure each other out—”

“It’s only weird if you make it weird.” Rey spooled out, not really considering her words.

Ben squinted at her, his shoulder hunching to make proper eye contact. “What you just said did not fucking make sense.” He stood up straight, wiping down his face with both palms. “I—what I’m trying to say is…how—wh—you cuddle with me—ugh—we hold hands!” He turned away groaning loudly, frenzied frustrated hands combing through his hair. Part of her desired to reach over and take his hands in hers, and whisper calming words…but he also did just shout rather angrily about holding hands with her. “WHY ARE WORDS DIFFICULT?” His sudden growl filled the room. Rey stilled, though not frightened. She was starting to understand what he was getting at with his sporadically strung together phases, yet did not display her troubled emotions chaotically like Ben.

Taking multiple deep breaths, he turned back around to Rey, looking less than composed. He prepared himself to continue, but Rey beat him to the punch.

“Why did you say ‘Love you, bye’?”

“What?”

“You said ‘Love you, bye’ in our last phone call. Did you mean it, or—or was it reflex? Because I completely understand if it was reflex—”

“I do.” He cut through her botched theory, slightly out of breath.

Rey blinked, his words barely registering in her mind before a rush of blood crashed through her ears.

“I—I ‘Love you, bye,’” He said, then winced. “I-I’m not asking you to leave or telling you ‘bye’ right, now I’m just repeating wh—”

Ben stopped talking as Rey charged towards him, with determination set in her eyes. Then she stopped a few inches away, peering up at him. She gulped, feeling their chests breath in sync, her eyes locked on his.
“I… I was,” She cleared her throat, but her voice remained hushed. Ben tilted his head forward to hear her. “I was going to do something cool, like… run up and kiss you… but, your kind of tall —massive really— and I didn’t know how—”

Air finally surging through his lungs at her confession, Ben pulled her close by the waist, bent down and pressed his lips to hers.

Neither moved for a moment, lost in the shock of the action… then the festering tension they tried their best to keep at bay, broke at once. Rey deepened the kiss as her hands frantically searching for purchase on his being rather than hanging limply by her side. She didn’t want to lose a bit of contact with him, her body burning to be closer to his. Sensing her struggle, Ben broke their initial kiss, peppering small nips against her neck. She squirmed a bit, the tingly sensation of his lips on her skin surprising Rey. Throaty giggles escaped her as she involuntarily leaned into his encapsulating embrace. She nuzzled him away to free herself, before recapturing his lips with hers. A sense of urgency built up from her core to her chest, Rey becoming lightheaded from just being with Ben.

His hands trailed down from their firm-yet-tender grip on her waist, to her thighs. Swiftly, he lifted her up, her legs wrapping around his waist on instinct. This new height allowed her better leverage, her arms encircling around his top of his broad shoulders; she felt safe in his arms, the fear of being dropped not once crossing her mind.

Their shift in weight caused Ben to absentmindedly step back, both too invested in the sent and touch of the other to notice.

That was until his back completely collided with his bookshelf, and the damned thick, hardcover blue book fell down from its precarious spot and hit Ben flat on the top of his head.

“Shit!” He groaned, their connected lips violently broken apart at the curse. His grip on her thighs tightening from the throbbing pain, though not once letting go.

Rey pulled away, doe eyes large with concern and her lips slightly swollen from their interrupted activity. Her hands flew to check his head, Ben trying his best to tilt away from her.

“Let me see.” She ordered, her hands brushing away his dark locks to check his head. Carding her fingers through his hair, Ben flinched when she lightly touched where the books edge made contact. “We might need to see a doctor; go to urgent care.”

“I’m… fine.” His mumble formed into a slow enunciating mid-sentence. “I’m fine.” He reiterated strongly, however his eyes momentarily became cross-eyed.

Rey huffed, her desire for him shifting into stubborn concern as he continued to avoid eye contact.

“If you are ‘fine’, try to put me down without dropping me.”

Rey waited impatiently for his grip to become slack, yet he remained firm.

“Damn it.” Ben dropped his head into the crook of her neck. “I know someone we can call.”

“Make sure he takes the Aleve as suggested on the bottle— no more, nor less.” Mitaka explained to Rey. Ben’s mousey assistant standing in the middle of the living room in old sweatpants and t-shirt. Fuzzy, bear claw slippers cover his feet, Ben feeling mildly apologetic for calling his assistant when the young man was getting ready for bed.
“Got it, every six hours.” She read the instruction off the bottle.

Mitaka looked back at Ben, who sat sitting up on the couch. “Keep that ice pack on it until it goes lukewarm. I don’t care if it is ‘too cold’.” He thought for a moment, then continued. "And you need rest. Immediately; no going to your mother's tonight."

Rey smiled at his assistant, clearly pleased by the confident persona she did not see at the office. “I will make sure he is a good patient, Mitaka.” She set the bottle on the dining table, eying his curiously. “How do you know so much about concussions? You even did the examination.” She’d watched the entire procedure with rapt fascination, Ben at one point glaring at her for being so intrigued when Mitaka asked how many finger he was holding. He later regretted doing so when his headache increased in intensity after.

“Medical school drop out.” He answered easily, not embarressed by this fact of life. “Realized I didn’t like blood when I was wrist deep in a body. It changes you.”

“That’s…great?” Rey said, Ben stifling a chuckle at her confusion.

“Thanks, Mitaka.” Ben spoke up with an air of finality, his assistant catching the memo. “I’ll see you on Monday.”

“Sure thing, boss.” The young man nodded once, heading towards the door. “Remember, I’m just two floor’s down if you need anything.” He called out once more before closing the door behind him.

“He lives here, in this building?” She frowned in thought. “No wonder he got here so fast.”

“Yeah,” Ben muttered, adjusting the ice pack on his head, “he lives with an intern and proof reader from the journal. I didn’t even know he lived here until this past year, and he’s been my assistant since I’ve been promoted.”

“Maybe it’s a sign you need him in your life.” Rey mused as she crossed to Ben, ignoring his subtle eye roll. “Come on, let’s get you to bed.” She flushed as she clasped her hand with his, helping him up from the couch.

Once standing, she intertwine their fingers. Realizing she was waiting for him to lead the way, Ben gently pulled her along to the short hall to the right. Opening the first door on the left, he shuffled into his bedroom, dropping the hand holding the ice pack to his side. Immediately, the coolness returned to his scalp.

“You need to keep it pressed, Ben.” Rey reminded him. She held the ice pack to his head, her palm atop his larger hand to keep it in place.

Shoes were kicked off in silence and clothing made slightly more bearable, Ben offering Rey an old t-shirt and jersey shorts that might fit her if she pulled the drawstring tighten enough. She left to the bathroom to change, the first time leaving his presense in several hours.

He did not want to think of what life would be like once she returned to Ahch-To, she leaving her mark in his daily routine. Her fragrance penetrated his apartment and her smile brightened up a cloudy day on the bridge.

Ben occasionally winced as he dressed for bed, finding it difficult to focus with both the numbing pain and the emotional exhaustion of the day. Rey entered the room as he pulled his shirt over his head, holding back a smug smirk at her swallowed squeak at the sight of him.
“Uh…” She gazed away, walking to the left side of the bed, “I’ll wake you around four, I guess, to take your pill.” Rey coughed into her shoulder.

“Ohay.” Ben mumbled, climbing into bed. Seeing him get comfortable, Rey joined half a second later, lying to face him.

Only a few inches of separation were between their bodies, both highly aware of the other’s presence, the night’s earlier events fresh to their memory. Pensively, Ben watched her fluff and pound the pillow to her liking, somehow finding her endearing-yet-annoying with all her tossing and turning before finding a position to suit her.

Once she stilled, Rey head tuned to him, Ben leaned in…only for his lips and nose to find her neck. She must have shifted. “I’d rather not when you’re concussed.” She murmured, resting her head against the juncture between his shoulder and arm, not quite on his chest.

“Ah…I see.” He settled for pressing a kiss to the crown of her head, a gesture he’d seen his father give his mother countless times, it felt natural show his affection in such a way.

Feeling his eyes droop, Ben allowed himself to rest…hearing a faint ‘Love you, bye’ from Rey as her hand loosely clutched the fabric of his shirt, right under his heart.

Chapter End Notes

NONE OF YOU CAN SAY I NEVER GAVE YOU ANYTHING.

Jk, I love you all, haha.

If the book didn't fall and hit Ben, they would have possibly went all the way, of course they would fumble and say awkward compliments, but they's still go all the way ;) But alas a copy of North & South by Elizabeth Gaskell had to ruin the day *shakes head*

Also, Ben's salary was a guess-estimate from what I googled on the subject. And sorry if the kiss did not live up to expectations; I tried.

Let me know what you think, comments and kudos are always appreciated! I love discussing the fic with my readers.

Follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97

LOVE YOU, BYE <3

edit 7/24/19: rereaders might notice this, but I removed the salary conversation from this chapter. I have received enough comments through out the last few months regarding it. Like I said before it was a guess based on some research on editors salaries and googling. But alas it is not my profession, so nothing is accurate *shrugs*
Fear Leads to Anger

Chapter Summary

Rey's visit comes to a close.

Chapter Notes

I am absolutely terrified to post this chapter, but here goes nothing!

Typos will be fixed through out the week!

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Does this look okay?”

Ben lifted his gaze from the book he’d been reading. Rey stood a few feet away from the bedroom door, waving towards her ensemble. A simple black dress, her usual Converse shoes, and a jean jacket. She opted out of wearing her thick rimmed glasses. Oddly enough, his first time seeing her in person without the glasses.

“You look great.” He answered honestly.

A frustrated grunt came from the back of her throat. “You can’t say that every time.”

“But it’s the truth.” Once he nudge the flimsy bookmark into the crease, Ben set the book down on the bedside table. “Why does it matter anyway? It’s just Poe and Amilyn, and their terrace.”

When Amilyn heard about his little injury, the group decided change plans and have a nice evening at her home rather than travel anywhere further. The train ride back to town was excruciating enough, Ben wincing at sudden jolts and stops. Luckily, Rey had been a stubborn caretaker, forcing him to take his pain killers and called Mitaka with progress reports. It wasn’t until the last hour and a half did she allow him to look at his phone or read book, concerned the screen of his phone or the concentrating too hard on the paper would cause him a headache.

He didn’t tell her she was right, or that he’d been staring at the same page in the book for a solid ten minutes. When she was correct, Rey could be smug; a trait he learned early in their friendship...or companionship would be the better word. Neither seemed to address the topic despite their conversation the previous night; they both ‘Love you, bye’ each other...yet that did that mean they were in a romantic relationship? Did she even want to be in a relationship? Rey was nearly ten years his junior, their age difference suddenly becoming glaringly obvious to him the longer he ruminated on their potential relationship.

He didn’t even think he’d see her in person, let alone kiss her and think beyond the prospect of friendship. Not that Ben blamed himself for being pessimistic on the situation; for most of his life
pessimism and a dash of realism, saved him rather than singe with a burn. Making a simple mental pros and cons list on the prospect seemed to be the logical decision.

Bizarrely, in his attempts to find the flaws of a long distant relationship with Rey, he concluded with far more pros than he expected. Well, more pros in the case of a romantic distant relationship when compared to no relationship at all.

“But this is different.” Rey stressed, tucking her hair behind her ears. Half a second later she untucked her hair, flooing it in frustration. She crossed her arms over her chest, looking anywhere but him. “I mean, Poe’s Poe. I don’t really give a damn. But Amilyn… is your godmother and therapist.” She gentle nudged his legs with the back of her hand, a signal to scoot over. He listened, she sitting on the edge of the bed, closer to his side.

“You have absolutely nothing to worry about,” Ben reassured her, “The worst she can do is over feed you pastries.”

“Does she have scones?” Rey asked, a small mischievous playing on her lips.

“In every flavor.” Ben replied, enjoying the sight of her eyes lighting up.

“Then what the hell are we waiting for? Let’s go!” She shook his arm in her excitement. Standing up, she took his hand in her own, pulling him hurriedly towards the door.

“We still have entire walk to get there, Rey!”

There were three things Poe Dameron discovered in the recent month since moving in with Amilyn. One, he’d never get used to being three hours ahead of the West Coast, despite Amilyn’s assurance he’s eventually fall into a new internal clock. Two, the park near his and Amilyn’s apartment might be the best place in the world; most of the dogs and their owners were friendly, and the trails were long enough for a decent morning jog. Three, Ben Solo did not like anyone nor did he ever smile—which bothered Poe more than he’d be willing to admit.

He tried, boy did Poe try… yet Ben seemed resistant to form comradery. The guy would try his best to get out of dinners with him and Amilyn, though she seemed little bothered by this. Possibly expecting this type of reaction from Ben; after all she had known her godson all his life. He once invited Ben to a baseball game, the guy less than interested and checking his phone as though his life depended on it.

He needs time to adjust, had been the most common phrase thrown to him about Solo, and Poe exerted great patience for Ben to adjust… only he never seemed to warm up him. For a moment, Poe thought Ben simply did not like him because of his relationship with Amilyn; his lovely partner shot that idea away. He has a lot going on right now; a lot. And he’s never been good at making friends, Amilyn would defend.

Okay, so Ben was a classic ‘A-Type Socially Awkward Nerd’—no big deal. Poe experienced his fair share of socially awkward and nerdy friends. The name Rey Kenobi immediately came to mind. Too blunt for her own good and emotionally transparent, Rey might have been the friend Poe struggled to maintain throughout the entirety of their association. In the beginning, it’d been easy. They were co-workers, who’d lightly complain about the day or talk music while the radio played in the background. Easy. Then he and Finn started dating and it became the complete opposite of easy. After seeing her for more than the five hours they’d overlap at the autoshop, Rey
was odd. She preferred to spend time with books and animals at the shelter, rather than go out with anyone her age. She gagged at the topic of clubbing, and cringed whenever their friend group hashed out stories of hookups and dates, Rey never contributing to the conversation.

Not to mention her overprotective streak; Poe feared if he ever made the wrong move, Rey would break one of his bones. The girl was tough than she looked. Then on top of it all she spoke to him condescendingly—as though *he* were the idiot.

*Well you do have a tendency to ‘mansplain’ things dear,* Amilyn had informed him when he expressed his concerns after seeing Rey in the park, *as far as I know she would not appreciate such an attitude.*

Begrudgingly, Poe agreed with Amilyn’s observations.

With this knowledge, Poe decided to be on his best behavior and try his best to be understanding of Ben and Rey’s personalities.

He just did not expect them to be so…chummy-chummy, for people who were particularly *not* chummy-chummy types.

Somehow the conversation drifted to *Harry Potter* of all things…

“The movies did the best they could with the allotted time they had—”

“I’m just saying, several of the characters were under developed to the point they barely got any screen time. We didn’t even get to learn about SPEW—”

“Because there isn’t enough time in two hours to start an elf *civil rights movement* storyline!”

“That’s exactly something a Slytherin would say.” Ben taunted, a smile tugging on the corner of his mouth.

Poe thought for sure he was seeing things. Ben Solo, smiling? And with kill-joy Rey Kenobi, who started to giggle like a lovesick fool at Ben’s horribly geeky jokes?

Amilyn didn’t seem to mind, observing the two contently. She liked Rey—*a lot.* The young woman wanted to help her in the kitchen before Ben thankfully intercepted; everyone who ever met Rey knew she was an awful cook. However, Amilyn insisted Rey join her, even if it was just handing the woman ingredients for the dessert. The two women were laughing and chatting over who knows what, though by the burning of Ben’s ears he gagged a good idea.

“I’m a Gryffindor.” He decided to throw out there once their conversation lullled.

“I know.” The two chorused with mild disgust, their words almost completely overlapping each other. This caused another fit of laughter from Rey, while Ben began to blush and unabashedly stare adoringly at the young woman.

Ben Solo was undeniably happy in the presense of Rey Kenobi. His unwavering gaze and smile in his eyes, provided evidence.

Maybe there really was someone for everyone.

“If you were on a deserted island, what would you take with you?” Rey asked as she walked
backwards, keeping her eyes lock to Ben’s.

“You’re going to trip.” He warned, his arms searched out in preparation to balance her if she were
to step too wide or too short. After dinner and dessert with Amilyn and Poe, the two decided to take
a little detour through the park before going back to the house. The dim lamp posts guided their
path through the mostly empty park, a mix of serenity and unease shifting in the air.

Ben wasn’t too sure if the atmosphere provide such a feeling, or if he and Rey were the cause of
the tension.

“Answer the question.” She implored, her pace surprisingly steady as she continued to walk
backwards.

He pinched his lips together, “Are we talking survival or entertainment?”

She rolled her eyes, “You’re over thinking it Ben.” Stopping their stroll, he waited. “Fine. Entertainment, because I think you’re smart enough to figure out how to survive.”

“You put too much faith in my abilities.” He muttered cheekily, the two once again walking. Their
steps pattered in sync yet opposite one another. “I guess…I’d take a collection of poetry by Emily Dickinson.”

Rey stopped, frowning up at him. “Why Emily Dickinson?”

“Why not Emily Dickinson?” He countered back, stepping toe to toe with her. “Humorous, yet
profound when you least expect it. Perfect entertainment.” He looked at a point above her head.
“I’m nobody! Who are you?” Ben’s eyes dropped back down to her. Lifting a finger, he booped
the tip of her nose. “Are you nobody too?” Momentarily, she went cross-eyed, blinking twice to
see him clearly again. He watched entranced, never realizing how large and bright her hazel eyes
were without the obstruction of her thick rimmed glasses.

Neither spoke, simply holding each other’s stare—both wondering who was going the move first,
speak first.

“Do you just,” Rey exhaled shakily, “know poetry off the top of your head?” She said with a hint
of amusement.

“It’s one of my few talents.” Ben shrugged, side stepping her to continue their stroll.

She stepped in time beside him. “I don’t think you give yourself enough credit.” She kicked a
forgotten twig in their path. “Because I think you’d be a great at many things if you ever gave
yourself the opportunity.”

“I think you put too much stock in me.” He quipped, not enjoying how quickly a trivial
conversation turned into something deeper. Usually, he did not mind. He especially had no qualms
when he had these conversations with Rey…yet recent events put him one edge. Life—work life,
personal life—was shifting in ways he never intended. To hear someone have blinding hope in him
burned. He could never live up to his parent’s expectations, his uncle’s expectation—how the hell
was he ever to live up to a doe eyed girl’s expectations?

“And I think you don’t put enough.” She admitted softly as if she sensed the inner turmoil coiling
inside him at her affirmations.

“What about you?” Ben blurted out, hoping to break the piercing lull between them.
“What about me?” They turned onto the path down and out of the park, the trees arching over their heads as their branches reached futilely to the dark sky.

“What would you take to a deserted island?” He restated her question from earlier.

“A friend.” She answered immediately, looking up at him smugly. “Maybe you, maybe not. But a friend.”

He halted, his mouth a gap. “Are you seriously going to make me look like the asshole here?”

“Absolutely.” She stated defiantly.

Shaking his head at her, Ben surged forward. Eyes widening, Rey began to run off but didn’t get far, Ben strong arms wrapping around her middle before she could get a few feet away. A rupture of belly laughs left her as he pressed his face into her neck, his hair and nose tickling her sensitive skin.

“Stop—stop!” She gasped between high pitched squeals, Ben’s own laughter rumbling through his chest, vibrating against her back. Twisting around in his arms, she did not hesitate as before—for her there was no reason to be skittish or nervous. She leaned up and kissed him firmly, square on the mouth. As she pulled away, he followed longingly. His hands trailed away from her waist to gently cradle her head, deepening the kiss.

Breaking away, Ben pulled her close to his chest. A surprised yelp escaped Rey, feeling herself suddenly swept up and off her feet, into strong arms. Frantically, her hands clutched his broad shoulders. “What are you—”

“We are going back to the house now.” He stressed, staring down at her over his glasses. She stared in his dark eyes, feeling heat course under her skin while under his gaze.

“Are—are you trying to seduce me?” Rey asked breathlessly before bubbling peals of laughter reverberated through her chest. Seductive Ben was both arousing, but extremely difficult to take seriously.

Ben refrained a frown, hoping to maintain his ‘smolder’. He leaned in closer to her, his nose nuzzling her ear just slightly. “Yes, is it working?”

She turned her head, her nose bumping his. “Yes, it is.”

When he woke up, Ben felt a weight on his chest. Tilting his chin down to the left, he noticed Rey curled towards him, her head resting on his sternum. The exhausted part of him wanted to shove her away, not exactly someone who enjoyed cuddling while in bed. For Rey on the other hand, he’d let her use him as a pillow forever if need be. Nevertheless, he’d been surprised she stayed after the previous night’s fiasco.

The previous night did not go as planned...at all. Ben wanted to hide and bury his head in the sand like an ostrich after everything. Rey, on the other hand, seemed as embarrassed as him but she seemed to be okay. More than okay since she still slept in the same bed as him.
After running out of the park like some horny teenagers on prom night, lots of kissing happened. Great, blissful kissing that quickly was turning into something more. Until Rey tripped over Trixie by the front door, Ben tumbling after her. His dog barked indignantly, unharmed. Meanwhile, Rey and Ben were bumped and bruised, but laughed it off, picking back up where they started…which proved to be more difficult since they continued to run into furniture, trying their best to make it into the bedroom without letting the moment die more than it already did.

Of course, Ben had a realization as his hand ventured lower between the juncture of her thighs and Rey gasping loudly on his lap; he did not have a condom…and things were already happening in his pants. Then he had to be an idiot and freeze altogether, causing Rey to think she did something wrong.

Awkward conversation ensued. Rey admitted she forgotten the pill (“I take for other reason besides safe sex, Ben. Like regulating my period.” “Okay! I was just asking. I feel like it is a very viable question to ask a sexual partner.”) in her haste to actually visit him and neither believed the pull-out would be the best method—therefore, the mood was effectively killed. With the little dignity he had left, Ben excused himself to the bathroom.

When he came back to the room, freshly showered and in a pair of pajama pants, Ben was astonished to find Rey already lying in bed asleep. Her hair was fanned out and her make-up removed, appearing more like the Rey in the picture she sent a month and a half previous.

He thought she’d leave, at least to her own guest bedroom, yet she stayed.

In her sleep, Rey moaned restlessly. She shifted, turning away from him. He ignored the urge to bring her closer to his chest as he quickly learned she did not like it.

Sleeping beside Rey was not for the faint of heart—she hogged the blankets, cuddled on her own terms, and drooled. She’d cocooned herself in the blankets the first night, before realizing she’s stolen them all from Ben at around three in the morning. Not that he complained, as he didn’t fall back asleep that night. The second night, both were a little braver and Ben found out about the cuddling. He tried to spoon her, only for Rey to shove him away. Only for her to wrapped her arms around his middle and hold him. Apparently, she preferred being the big spoon. And the drool…the drool was everywhere. His shirt, his pillows, his blanket. One of the nights he tried to prevent it, only for Rey to swat him away in her sleep. He decided living with the drool was better than Rey’s left hand slap.

Over the course of the few days, Ben found he did not mind her sleep habits. In the end it did not matter because she was there beside him.

Out of the corner of his eyes, he noticed her hand snaked out and lightly touched his arm.

“You think loud.” She mumbled dazedly into the sheets, still within the clutches of sleep. Not another sound left her except for her steady breathing.

“Who taught you how to cook?” Rey asked, mesmerized by his whisking. She sat across from him, on one of the kitchen barstools nursing her cup of coffee.

They were having a late breakfast, both moving slower than usual that Sunday. Though neither would say it, they wanted their last full day together to last as long as it possibly could.
“A combination of people, but mostly Amilyn and my Uncle Luke.” He poured the eggs into the awaiting pan. “They looked after more than my own parents. It was natural they taught me basic life skills.” He dropped a few of the chopped ingredients into gradually forming omelet.

“What,” She cleared her throat. Best to ask before she lost her nerve. “—what actually happened? I know I read your essay, but…you focus so much on the aftermath, I—I never quite understood what transpired between you two.” Ben rose an eyebrow at question. “I know he wasn’t the nicest man.”

He sighed, dropping his focus to his task at hand. “We just never saw eye to eye. I don’t think he ever wanted me to become a writer.” He said dejectedly, his tone of petulant teen rather than a full-fledged adult.

Rey felt the objection dance on her tongue. Luke felt the complete opposite, he told her so himself; he thought his nephew was an amazing writer. In her chest she felt the knowledge weight heavy, she unable to reassure Ben.

“He was depressed in his drunken glory, and I was sad and angry because of my parent’s divorce. When those two mixed together, we created chaos.” He said with a sense of helplessness. Neatly and with practice, Ben folded the omelet. The movements were done without concentration—muscle memory—Rey able to picture Ben alone in his apartment, making breakfast for himself every day. Was that a way to live life, through the motions? For Ben, maybe it wasn’t, but he seemed too afraid of the unknown alternative. “My uncle was my creative writing professor at Ahch-To. If you ever heard stories around campus about a kid who broke a window, well…” He shrugged guiltily, the tips of his ears burning bright red.

“Ah.” Rey murmured, as though this were a new revelation. She sipped her coffee thoroughly to prevent any possible slip ups.

“Anyways, I haven’t spoke to him in years. Last I heard he was in Ireland.” He plated the omelet and began making a second one for himself. “Wherever he is, I hope he’s happy. His lessons, influence pushed me to be better even though he was a dick. He at least deserves happiness.”

Cutting into the omelet, Rey decided to not probe the subject any further. She did not have the heart to tell Ben the truth about his uncle.

“Do you ever think about them—your family?” Ben asked as he watered his mother’s plants. The morning overcast remained through the afternoon, Ben finding the mood calming, reminding him of Ahch-To.

Rey sat on the bench by the birdbath, Trixie curled at her feet. She thought for a moment, then answered, “Yes and no.”

“How so?” Ben set the watering can down, taking a seat beside Rey.

“I guess for a little while I did. Things my parents would come and get from which ever home I’m at—w-as a-t.” She correct herself. “But then I found my extended family and they wanted nothing to really do with me either so…” She smiled tightly, years of abandonment reflecting in her eyes. “I try to move on.” Her horse voice proved it was easier said than done.

Intertwining her hand with his, Ben felt her relax in his touch.
“Family doesn’t have to be the people you are biologically related to,” He squeezed her hand, Rey clutching back harder. “Sometimes they are simply people who fell like home.”

Her gaze soften under his, hazel more welcoming than any other color. She lifted their hands up, pressing a kiss to his knuckles. “I know.”

“Favorite movie?”

Rey groaned as Ben captured another one of her pieces on the board.

After debating over cards or chess, the two decided on checkers—only whenever someone caught a piece, they’d be able to ask their opponent a question. Anything they wanted to ask was on the table, both an exhilarating and terrifying prospect.

“That’s a lame question.” Rey declared unamused. Ben believed her sour mood was due to her current losing streak, only getting one question in throughout the game.

“No its not.” Ben played with the red piece he captured, twisting it between two fingers. “You know mine.”

Rey rolled her eyes as she adjusted the cushion she was sitting on. Playing checkers on the coffee table might not have been the best idea in retrospect; both were caught in uncomfortable positions between the table and other furniture. Ben was unable to move his legs from where they stretched out under the table.

“Because we watched it the other night.” She said, referring to his undying love for *Roman Holiday*.

Ben placed the red piece in a stack with its brothers and sisters. “I think…yours is an embarrassing movie and you don’t want to say it.” A knowing smirk played on his lips as Rey fumed the longer he spoke.

“Fine you fuckwad.” She growled, sitting up straighter. “…It’s *Tarzan*.”

Ben looked at her down his glasses. “The live-action—”

“God, no! That’s blasphemous piece of shit right there!” She exploded, knocking over her one collected black piece. “I am talking about the 1999 animated masterpiece, *Tarzan*, with the Phil Collins soundtrack.”

“An animated movie?” Ben stated dumbly.

“Yes.” She said with conviction, pushing her glasses higher on her nose. “It’s a beautiful film…” Tears began to pool in her eyes.

“Are you crying?” He asked, stunned by her reaction to mention of the movie.

“Of course I am!” She wiped her incoming tears, pouting grumpily at him. “I love the movie so much.”

Ben held back his laughter as Rey continued to cry and humble incoherently about the movie. The last time he heard her this emotional was when she was talking about the fire scene in *The Scavenger and the Prince*, crying over how the two held hands by the fire… *Wait a minute.* “It’s
the hand touch scene isn’t it? The one that kills you?” He found himself accusing, needing to voice the train of thought before he wrote it off as ridiculous.

“How did you…?” She gapped at him, before nodding. “Yes.” She huffed at her own pathetic-ness, but if anyone were to know, it’d be Ben. “It’s one of my dreams to reenact the hand touch moment.” She admitted.

A manic smile bloomed from Ben, surprised by his own revelation. “You have a hand kink.”

“I beg your pardon?” Rey flushed, finding a strange grin pulling at the corners of her mouth at the sight of his own glee.

“All the hand holding, playing with my fingers, kissing the back of my hand. You were completely fine with just getting off with my hand last night, even when I told you what happened!” He spoke between fits of laughter. He ducked deftly when the couch cushion she’d been sitting on was tossed at him, followed by little pelts from the board piece. She grumbled when the pieces bounced off his chest.

“I do not have a hand kink!” She defending.

Ben gulped for air, trying his best to appear calm. “Rey, it is perfectly natural to have fetishes and kinks—”

“You’re an arsehole.” She spat, eyebrows cinching together. Upset, she crossed her arms over her chest, looking anywhere but him.

Silently, Ben held his hand out to her, knowing she’s be pleased no matter how upset she claimed to be by his accusation. “I’ll reenact it.”

Her head popped up, her eyes pooling with tears once more. “You will?” She whispered, watching his apprehensively.

“Of course.” He agreed, hoping her mood would lift up.

Without prompting, Rey held her hand out. Ever so slightly, she leaned forward and pressed her open palm to Ben’s. Their hands met digit for digit, splayed together. Involuntarily, Ben shuddered at the contact. There was something primal, yet delicate in the touch…as though everything else could fade away and they’d still be connected. Quietly, he observed their hands; he never realized how much smaller her hand was compared to his, until they pressed together in such a fashion. Looking past their hands, he noticed Rey seemed lost in thought. As though feeling his gaze, she shifted her eyes to him. A lone tear trailed down her cheek. She released a strangled squeak, “We’re doing the moment!”

“I can do it.” Rey declared, tying the apron around her waist

“Sure you can.” Ben nodded, sitting in her usual spot at the kitchen counter.

She huffed, her hands on her hips. “I don’t like it when you have that condescending tone.”

Ben sat up, crossing then uncrossing his arms over his chest, uncomfortable with her stern tone. He decided to rest his forearm against the counter. “What condescending tone?”
She wasn’t pleased with his ‘playing dumb’ attitude. “The one where you thinking I’m going to fuck up, but you’ll let me try anyway.”

All the ingredients for a spaghetti dinner—one of the easiest dishes to make—were set out on the counter by the stove for Rey to use. Ben thought it’d be fun if they made dinner together, but Rey insisted she knew how to make spaghetti. On that note, Ben took her to the closest market to go grocery shopping for everything she would need. As in, he expected her to make the sauce from scratch, like him. Frantically, she google searched recipes while Ben went to the wine aisle, Rey finding one on Pinterest that appeared semi-normal and non-vegan or vegetarian.

Now with the ingredients in front of her, Rey concluded she was doomed.

“I don’t use that tone with you.” Ben said as he reached for the chopping board and a tomato. “I am a very encouraging person.”

Catching him in the act, she slapped his hand away. “No helping.” She picked up a knife and began chopping the garlic. “And you are only encouraging when you want to be. I wouldn’t say it is your dominate trait.”

Ben shrunk back, watching her in silence as she worked her way through chopping the vegetables required for the sauce.

“You…you might want to boil the pasta. It will take time.” Ben muttered into his hand, his body itching to jump up and help her. “And you chopped the tomatoes too big, they need to be diced.”

Rey stared down at the tomatoes and then back up at Ben, the man squirming in his seat.

“I’ll…boil the pasta if you take care of the sauce.” She compromised.

“Oh, thank god.” Ben breathed, moving to stand beside Rey in the kitchen. He went to work on the tomatoes, dicing them properly and turned on the stove. As he rearranged the ingredients set before them, he began to quietly instruct her on how to make the sauce. Happy to share his knowledge with her, to teach her, to help make something with her.

A stubborn part of Rey wanted to make dinner—even though she knew how inept her skills were—to prove she was a capable adult to Ben. Not some moron who barely knew her way around a kitchen and cried over Disney films. The serene peace he radiated cooking beside her banished any misgives Rey felt of herself and her worth concerning Ben. He didn’t want to control her or show off; he’d never acted negatively towards her, to be the alpha in the situation. He simply knew she did not know what on Earth she was doing. He not only wanted to prevent impending disaster; he wanted to be in the moment with her.

“I recommend sautéing the mushrooms before anything else—hey are you okay?” Ben stopped his rambling instructions once he noticed Rey simply staring up at him. His strangely handsome face and eyes too vulnerable for his faint heart. “Do I have something on my face?”

“Ah, no—sorry.” She tuned to the stove, hands at the ready. “You were saying mushrooms…”

“I’m sorry Trixie, but you cannot stop Rey from leaving by laying on her clothes.” Ben chastised his dog, the girl curled up on a pile of Rey’s belongings in the guest bedroom. She left the duffle open with all her clothes packed away, Trixie believing it to be an opening invitation to sleep on. “Plus she just washed, it’s not very nice to get dog germs all over them. She does have a dog of her
Trixie whimpered, Ben gently nudging her off the unused bed. She trotted off down the hall to the bathroom door, the sound of the faucet running on the other side. Patiently, Trixie waited for Rey to finish brushing her teeth.

Once dinner was finished, the inevitable was addressed. Despite their best efforts, Rey’s visit was coming to a close, her departure the next day. For most the remaining night, they tried their best to fight sleep, but knew she need to pack and rest. Rey’s flight wasn’t until ten in the morning, the two deciding to leave a little after five to arrive with plenty of time for an early breakfast and security check. Planning on going to bed soon, Ben did some last minute double checks on the time of her flight and route, while Rey gathered her toiletries.

Initially, Ben tried to convince Rey to sleep on the flight, but she reminded him of his own obligations—work. An occasion he did not look forward to at all, especially since the latest edition would be the topic of the conversation. None of the editors appreciated, Snoke’s inquisition after their release days. An average editor-in-chief would know rough drafts and participate in selections with a keen eye; Snoke, on the other hand, preferred to make a game out of their work. Seeing whoever listened to his whispers the best, whoever picked the piece he’d been pushing throughout the month.

Ben rarely pleased Snoke, going against him in spite on most matters. He did no different with the latest edition; he, Phasma, and Hux worked together to at least make a cohesive theme from the pieces approved. Hopefully, with the three banding together, they stood a stronger front against Snoke and his pet project, Qi’ra.

Glancing at the clock on the bedside table, Ben frowned. Half past midnight—Rey had been in the bathroom well over a half hour. She was usually in and out in ten minutes. Leaving the bedroom, Ben went down the hall, the sound of faucet still running filling the house. Trixie perked up at him, titling her head curiously at the door. Apparently, she felt the same as her owner.

“Hey, Rey.” Ben called out as he knocked on the door. “Are you okay?”

There was a pause, the faucet shut off in her silence.

The door flung open, reveling a teary eyed Rey still dressed in her clothes from the day.

“What happened—”

“You fucking bastard.” She seethed, a shuddering breath escaping her. Her grip on the doorknob tightened, while the other clutched her cellphone. “I trusted you—with everything. No one knows as much about me as you do—”

“Rey, I have no idea what you are talking about.” Ben sped out, alarmed with how distraught Rey appeared. She must have been crying the entire time she’d been in the bathroom, her face blotchy and nose bright red.

Staring up at him, mouth a gap, the anger in her eyes shifted to one of pity. “You—you have no idea what I’m talking about?” Ben blinked at her, his hands hesitantly hanging in the air as though he’d pull her into his chest. She stepped back, shaking her head angrily at the ceiling. “Of course you’d have no idea what I’m talking about.” Taking a deep breath, she shoved past him to the guest bedroom.

Confused by her outburst and tear stain face, Ben rushed after her. “Rey, what happened? I need to
Wordlessly, she handed him her laptop. The device had been sitting on the desk, previously opened to her email. Instead, the First Order Literary Journal logo greeted him; it was the latest digital edition of the journal. Trying to keep up the changing times of media, First Order Literary offered both physical and digital copies of their journal to subscribed members. The digital copy usually went live at midnight. “Scroll, read—whatever the fuck—I don’t know.” She mumbled between hiccups of tears, plopping herself down on the edge of the bed.

Listening to her incoherent comments, Ben frowned as he bypassed the articles he fought to change and ultimately were vetoed by the Praetorian Circle. He ignored the jab of pride he felt at the knowledge their plan for a theme fell apart at the seams. Reaching the last few pages, Ben stopped his scrolling. His eyes caught an all too familiar title. One he poured over with Rey endlessly for months.

**King of Nothing** by Anonymous

But the non-fiction piece wasn’t anonymous, the author sat before him, he knew her better than anyone.

“That—that can’t be right…” He skimmed through the piece, noticing how lines and structure were slightly altered to hide the author’s identity. Rey’s birth name was removed as well, changed to Jane Doe, to further provide anonymity. All traces of her removed, yet the work undeniable Rey’s, her style of writing like a fingerprint. “No one should have access to my work computer, except for IT—” He distinctly remembered Qi’ra working in IT, before transferred to Sales, and ultimately given a promotion to editor. “Fuck.”

“They stole my piece.” She bit out, “They stole my writing, and I can’t do anything about it.”

Ben set the laptop down on the bed, kneeling beside Rey. He reached for her hands, holding them in his own. She did not respond, her grip slack. “We—I can fix this. We can get the piece published somewhere else, so you can get proper credit.” He promised, still in shock over what he saw on her computer screen.

Rey shook his hands off, “You don’t get it!” She scrubbed her face, fighting off rebel tears. Ben looked up at her helplessly. “They altered the piece enough to not recognize the author, but not enough for it not to be considered plagiarism if published elsewhere!” She swallowed tightly, gulping for air. Soothingly, Ben ran his hands up and down her arms. She shrugged him away again, his attempts to bring her comfort shot down once more. He chewed on the inside of his cheek, doing his best to remind himself Rey was upset. She was upset, he was upset for her…but could not let his emotions get the best of him. “I can never do anything with that piece ever again, Ben. No memoir, no publishing elsewhere, competitions. I cannot use it—”

Ben huffed loudly, cutting her off mid-rant. He stood up from the floor, towering over her. “Then we’ll go into the office in the morning, and we’ll see about getting your name on it—”

“With what power?” She shot back, neck craned back to stare him dead in the eye. “I am nothing to them. You know that, I know that. I am a nobody, from some nowhere town on the west coast.”

His skin itched at her foul words, Ben unable to stand Rey viewing herself in such a bleak light.
Rey was brilliant, better than most he encountered—he’d go as far and say she was his equal in many ways. Her temper flared at the same rate, her compassion radiated the same heat. She was somebody, everything to him, even if she did not acknowledge this and clung restlessly to her past self. Her past life.

“Yeah, you are a nobody!” He found himself spitting out her opinions back to her face, hoping she’d see the truth and lies of her statement. “You are nothing, to them. To everyone.” Ben growled, his frustration festering from Rey shooting down every offer to fix the situation—forgetting to remain calm, to remember the real reason for raising his voice. If she want to fight and be stubborn, he can hand it right back. “And you are going to keep on being a nothing if you always see yourself that way.”

Rey blinked furiously, her eyes wet from unshed tears. “You're a fucking coward.” She stated lowly. “You keep on saying all these ways you can ‘fix it’,” She sneered, Ben suddenly seeing the harsher side of Rey he was believing didn’t existed the longer her communicated with her. He was wrong; completely and utterly wrong. “And you are ignoring the obvious choice—”

“I’m not going to tell them about Vader, Rey.” Ben said, stepping further away from her. “That’s my decision to make—”

“That you are never going to make because you are a fucking coward!” She seethed right back, standing up from her spot on the edge of the bed. Ben flinched at her words, his own eyes welling in pent up frustration. “You can do so many things Ben, but you won’t.” She exhaled deeply, letting her eyes drift away from him. “Ben, I’m not telling you or forcing you to make decision about Vader. I’m just saying none of this would have happened, if you said something sooner.”

Ben scoffed in disbelief, the sound coming deep within his gut. “Are you saying it’s my fault this all happened? Because, sweetheart, it is not my fault.” He ground out, knowing how the nickname would taunt her.

“Don’t call me sweetheart,” She hissed, glowering at him, “and don’t even try to say it is my fault, when I’m not the idiot who uses his private email on his work computer, where anybody in the company can access it.”

“Well if you didn’t want to eventually get published, you should have never answered my ad!” Ben bellowed, Rey inching back. “Then none of this would have happened, we would have never met and we would not have this fucking issue!”

Silence fell before the two, the gravity of his statement weighing between them.

Ben swallowed, his tears falling freely. “Rey, I…”

“No.” Rey croaked into the still air. She shook her head slowly. “I…I want to go home.” She turned away frantically collecting her things. A sob wracked her body, Rey leaning on the surface of the bed for support. “Wherever the hell home is, because it’s no longer with you.”

A wave of crippling fear crashed upon Ben, he unable to move as he watched her with growing panic. “Rey—Rey I didn’t mean it.” He bit out, his fist clenching and unclenching at his side. “I didn’t mean it.” He repeated with more fervor, she ignoring him as she flung her backpack then duffle on to her shoulder.

“I don’t want to talk to you.” She said evenly, her voice wavering in her ill control. Walking by the bedroom door, she picked up her shoes and continued on her route out of the house.
Seeing her disappear past the doorway, Ben’s feet finally moved. He told himself not to run, not to cause more of a scene, knowing the entire neighborhood heard their screaming match.

“Rey it’s late—your flight doesn’t leave for another nine hours.” He reasoned as he met her at the door. She was hopping in place, struggling to put on her shoes with her bags on her shoulder.

“Then I’ll wait in the airport.” She said, finally getting her left shoe on. Hastily she shrugged on her jacket, not caring if the strap of her duffle bag was caught in the middle.

Rey hurriedly opened the door, Ben catching it before it slammed against the wall.

“Let me at least drive you—”

“No, Ben.” She ordered, turning to face him since she left the room. “I need to go, before we say any more cruel things we don’t mean.” She laughed shakily, as though her body could not produce any other emotion because she spent her stock of anger and tears on him and the world. Reaching up with both hands, she caressed the sides of his face.

His eyes trailed her every move, resisting the urge to scoop her in his arms and beg her to stay.

“Please…” He said brokenly.

Tenderly, she brushed his hair behind the ears she adored. “I love you,” She lightly kissed the corner of his mouth, “Now, good-bye.”

She stepped out of his space and out the door without looking back.

From the door, Ben watched as she walked down the familiar path to the train station, possibly calling an Uber to meet her there. He waited until she was no longer seen, lost in the streets of the town with her confident yet wavered stride.

She was right. He can do many things…and he was coward for not doing anything.

He pulled out his phone, finding the international phone number. He tapped called, speaking immediately once the phone was picked. “What percentage of ownership stake does someone need to own to have the power to shut down a company?”

Chapter End Notes

Now, dear reader, everything will be okay. Everything will be okay. We still have a bunch more chapters to go, and we ended on a grim but possibly hopeful note.

Another note: They will eventually have sex. I PROMISE. I EVEN KNOW WHICH CHAPTER IT WILL HAPPEN. AND THEY WILL BE HAPPY. AND ITS NOT THE LAST CHAPTER EITHER.

I personally did not feel right ending the chapter how I have been intending to end it for WEEKS, with them sleeping together the night before. Didn't sit well with me. Also, Ben hadn't slept with anyone in forever, so please forgive him *shrugs*

Another follow up note: I have been spoiling you all with these quick updates because
I will be on vacation starting July 12th-July 19th. I will still respond to comments, but no new chapters until possibly the 22nd.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers!

Follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
The Strong Survive, the Noble Overcome

Chapter Summary

Ben makes plans. Rey returns to Ahch-To.

Chapter Notes

So…this is awkward.

You know how I said I wouldn't update while on vacation. Well I decided to do that thinking I would not have Wi-Fi in the hills of nowhere, only to discover I so have internet connection. Also, if I haven't responded to your comment yet, I will respond by the end of the weekend.

Also, I know zero legal jargon or anything really, so its kind of just brushed upon in this chapter.

So here's the next chapter :D

Typos will be fixed through out the week.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ben why the hell did you call us here at three in the morning?” Hux growled into his steaming mug of coffee. Ben, the ever conscious host, prepared a large pot of coffee for his guests, knowing they’d be loyal and arrive though not without their own mumblings.

The three other guests in the room murmured in agreement. Mitaka looked a little befuddled by the arrangement, huddled in the arm chair by the heater with a quilted blanket draped over his shoulders. Unfortunately, Ben’s assistant was still dressed in his nightclothes and a quilted blanket draped over his shoulders, the young man sitting in the spot furthest from Hux to avoid the editor’s taunts. Beside him in one of the pulled up dining tables was Paige Tico. Ben felt a twinge of pity at the sight of her—the usually militaristic put-together woman was clearly dressed in a rush by the wrinkled blue sweater and old, grass-stained sweatpants pants she wore. The only person who appeared remotely decent yet professional, was Gwen Phasma—she skirt and blouse pressed and neatly tucked.

None of them were happy to be in Ben’s apartment by the looks of their tried, grim faces.

Fidgeting, Ben stood before everyone, trying his best to find the balance between welcoming and authoritative. He needed them to agree; he needed all of them to agree before moving forward. If there was anything he learned from Vader, it was handling serious matters alone lead to more trouble.
He took a deep breath, “The journal published an author’s work without consent, nor gave the individual credit for their piece.” Ben announced to the four.

No one reacted, merely blinking, dumbfounded by the information.

A hefty sigh sounded from Hux. “There’s nothing we can do about that—” He began, Paige cutting him off before he could completely discard the accusation.

“Legal action can be taken.” She glared openly at Hux, before averting her eyes to Ben. “But how did you find out this happened?”

Biting his lips together, Ben stood a little taller, hoping his strong demeanor would hide his connection to the situation. He did not need anymore teasing from the four, especially when he wasn’t too sure where he stood with Rey. She loved him, loves him…yet she left.

He hastily reminded himself Rey was going to leave anyway. Her visit was over, her flight would be in less than seven hours. She’d be back home, everything would fall back into its normal pattern, except everything would be different. They were something well beyond friendship, and he want to ask her to be his girlfriend —no matter how trivial the term sounded in his mind…then the First Order had to screw up the end of their weekend together.

“The author is someone close to me.” His voice momentarily broke on the word ‘close,’ Ben mentally scolding himself for his rise in emotions. The four other people in the room glanced at each other warily. They knew by the tone of his voice; Rey. “She immediately informed me on what happened.” He answered briskly, hating how their pitiful gazes pierced him.

No one pressed the identity further.

A round of silent hot potato went around the room, before Phasma cleared her throat, deciding to take the lead.

“Ben, there isn’t much we can do,” Phasma broke the tension delicately, “Snoke doesn’t listen to us, nor does he publish our sections. You wouldn’t have called us here to mope over this troubling news.” She held her chin up, eyes him levelly. “You have a plan—what is it?”

She leaned forward, the other three subconsciously following the movement, becoming a unit.

Ben licked his lips, hands on his hips. “We’re shutting down the First Order.”

There was a split second of silence…Ben felt his twinge of hope falter a fraction.

Hux’s bark of laughter filled the room. He set his mug down on the coffee table with dull thud.

“And how do you suppose we do that? Hmm?”

A spike of annoyance surged through Ben at Hux’s animosity. Leave it to the weasel to get under his skin. “I’m—” He held his head high, channeling his mother’s leading tone of directedness. “I have ownership stake in the journal.”

A sigh of relief left Mitaka, the young man slumping further into the arm chair. “Oh, thank god. You know. I was about to explode keeping it from you, Ben.” The young man seemed lighter at the news, yet a feeling a dread seeped into Ben’s bones. Someone else knew—and it was his assistant of all people.

Did his grandfather truly have it out to make Ben’s life ten times more difficult, and from beyond the grave?
“Keeping what?” Hux squinted at the mousey man.

“He’s Vader’s grandson.” Mitaka stated in a matter of fact manner before Ben could interject.

“What?” Phasma gapped at Ben, stunned by this revelation.

Meanwhile, Paige smiled tired, yet proudly up at him. Though nothing was explicitly exchanged on the matter beyond the identity of his grandfather, it did not take one long to piece together the image. Ben was the long-lost grandson, therefore he owned a large stake of the journal. If anyone in the room would be supportive of Ben’s plans, it’d be Paige Tico.

His eyes narrowed on Mitaka, “How did you know?” The assistant flinched at his unintentional biting tone.

Mitaka gulped, sitting a little straighter. “Well…Vader kind of told me when he promoted you.” He admitted, frozen under Ben’s stare. “My hands were tied behind my back on the matter—he gave me my job Ben, without even giving me a proper interview. I owed him.”

“What do you mean—you practically stumbled over your feet in his present!” Ben argued, crossing his arms over his chest, becoming more imposing in the stance.

Mitaka looked weary, eye downcast as her answered Ben. “It was Vader’s surgery that made me realize I didn’t want to be a doctor.” He explained plainly, fingers fidgeting on his lap. “I was one of the residents designated to supervise him while he recovered at the hospital. We started talking while I was checking his vitals…I believe he sensed I absolutely despised my current track of life and offered me job on the spot.”

Despite rarely talking to his assistant on private matters, Ben knew the majority details of Mitaka’s journey to the First Order—came from a line of doctors, pressured into the same profession, until he decided to quit due to how miserable he became, to the point of needing medical attention himself. Essentially disowned from his own family, Mitaka work hard to keep his job and lived with some oddballs…but he was happy. Ben just did not know Vader played a pivotal part in Mitaka’s change of course.

“You could have been a surgeon, yet you are a measly assistant.” Hux stated blandly, baffled by Mitaka’s life choices.

“Not everyone needs to be in power, Hux. Some of us like just being happy.” He grumbled, pulling his quilt tighter over his shoulders as barrier between himself and Hux.

Ben huffed, rolling his eyes at emotional jabs. He really didn’t need another Hux and Mitaka debacle—the previous one last four days. “Okay, now that we have bared our souls, let’s—”

“Wait,” Phasma declared, standing up from her spot on the couch. “Why haven’t you done anything, Ben?” Her lips pinched together in displeasure. “As far as I can tell, you’ve known for a while. All of our problems would be solved or nonexistent if you said something sooner.” Her words echoed Rey’s, Ben’s face twisting into an unsettling scowl at the familiar accusation.

Before Ben could respond Paige stood up to face Phasma, her usually content face sharper as she took defense. “It’s his decision, not anyone else’s.”

“Well, Miss Tico,” Hux sneered, not bothering to physically join the standoff. “I don’t see why you are here—”

“Because Ben called her, like he called all of us.” Mitaka interjected, shuffling to standing beside
Paige. The two quietly fist bumped in alliance.

“But you two don’t even know anything about the editing process.” Hux remarked snootily, dusting off the lapels of his jacket. “Honestly there should be no reason—”

“—oh, fuck off Hux—”

“He’s not wrong—”

“Are we seriously taking sides? Our journal basically committed a crime—”

“Don’t be so melodramatic Tico. It’s just—”

“Everyone shut the fuck up, and sit down!” Ben bellowed, instantly gaining their attention. Nodding placidly they listened to his orders—though not without sending each other glances of disgust. Licking his lips, Ben’s eyes traveled to each individual, contemplating his next move. “Let me explain.” He said with soft sternness, compelling the four guests to listen. “Yes, I’m Vader’s grandson; I’ve only known for a short while.” He swallowed, gritting his teeth together. “But it’s time to do something about it.” He said more to himself than anyone in the room; their eyes watched him impatiently. He steeled himself for what was to come. There was no going back after this; but he knew he needed to act now before it was too late. “Stealing someone’s work is the last straw; it is ethically unsound. I own enough stake in the journal to shut it down—my lawyer is looking into the details as we speak.”

When Ben called Cassian, his friend was not exactly pleased to be woken up at five in the morning, but immediately went to work when Ben proposed his plan.

“So you’re just going to walk in and say ‘Hey Snoke, I’m Vader’s grandson. I’m shutting this place down’?” Hux asked with twinge of concern for Ben.

“No.” He scoffed, looking away. That may have been exactly what Ben was going to do, but hearing it from Hux, he realized he might need a stronger game plan. “Of course not.”

The ginger did not look impressed.

“We’re going to legally shut the journal down—” Ben began again, only to be stopped by a weary moan from Mitaka.

“People will lose their jobs…” He muttered, eyebrows knitting together worriedly.

“Yes…” Ben winced, rubbing his forehead, “But no…I mean you guys will still have jobs.” He observed their faces of disbelief; everything he was sputtering put was a contradiction, in an attempt to gently announce the news. He really needed to stop trying to propose his plan in a roundabout way; Rey would have already hit him upside the head if she were there. “Once I shut down the First Order, I would like to start my own journal with all of you.”

“You’d…you’d want us to work for you?” Mitaka blinked in astonishment. Beside him, Paige’s jaw dropped, not expecting an offer in this mess of a meeting.

“You’re poaching us.” Hux uttered, finally understanding why’d they were all gathered.

“All positions are open, you can have whatever role you want.” Ben hurriedly followed up, hoping to keep them on board.

Phasma smirked, her eyes drifting up in thought. “Our own journal?” She mused, glancing at Hux.
“I honestly do adore the sound of that.”

Paige waved her hand to stop all other comments, catching Ben’s undivided attention. A blooming smile inched on her mouth. “If…if we make our own journal, you’ll have to be Editor-in-Chief.” There were murmurs of agreement, even from the sour Hux. “And we might want to recruit others —”

“Maybe a walk out.” Hux suggested, “During the meeting this afternoon. There are enough people who despise Snoke to just do it for the sake of causing drama.”

“I—I don’t want to make any major waves. My goal is to simply take my share and shut it down.” Ben said, sounding smaller than his imposing form.

“You doing that is tsunami, Ben.” Paige said gently, shrugging a shoulder up. “Might as well make it a hurricane.”

“What are we going to call this journal?” Mitaka spoke up, picking up a pad and pen from Ben’s lazy stack of notebooks on the coffee table. “We need to give people a name.”

Ben inhaled deeply at the thought. He was essentially destroying his grandfather’s legacy, building his own from the ashes of what he burns down. Reflect on his brief time with Anakin, Ben realized he needed to honor him in some way. Anakin’s journal might be gone, but his influence—the people he poured into—would carry his legacy….like the Knight of Ren from his book *The Longing You Seek*. His grandfather spoke highly of the character, as though the young man were a tangible being instead of a fictional character.

Yet the longer Ben lingered on the story, Vader’s obsession towards the end of his life, he came to the overwhelming understanding; Ben himself was the Knight of Ren. Anakin, his grandfather, was the master. Their linage connected.

“We’ll call it, us, the Knights of Ren.”

One fee of a hundred and fifty dollars, along with some haggling, Rey was able to exchange her ticket for an earlier flight. Practically a goddamn red-eye, but a three in the morning flight back to California. The five hour flight then followed a three and a half hour bus ride from Los Angeles to Ahch-To, LAX the closet airport for Rey to travel from. In her haste to leave, she did not think about the overall travel hassle she put herself through, her main goal to get back to her apartment as soon as possible. The only place she hoped still felt familiar. Her long night and morning of traveling led her to finally arriving in Ahch-To around nine-thirty in the morning, the three hour time difference between the East Coast and West Coast making her mind a little muddled.

Uncoordinatedly, Rey shoved her key into the slot, swing the door open widely.

Only for her hands flying up to cover her eyes. “GODDAMIT! How hard is it to make it to the bedroom?” She growled through a bubbling sob. She knew exactly how difficult it was to reach the bedroom, she had the little bruises to prove it.

From the couch, Rose and Finn quickly separated, covering themselves the best they could with throw pillows and a spare blanket. “Rey! Wh—I thought you weren’t coming back until this afternoon!” Finn yelped, frantically trying to appeare decent with a pillow over his lap.

By the doorway, Rey dropped her bags, kicking the door closed with her foot. She turned back to
the two; Rose and Finn sat beside each other on the couch, cover enough for Rey not to be too scandalized. Shaking her head tiredly, Rey left to the kitchenette. A pot of fresh, untouched coffee sat on its hotplate while a boxers and a robe laid discarded on the floor.

Rey grimaced.

“I see you two made up.” She called out as she searched for one of her mugs in the cabinet. Finding her *Jurassic Park* mug front and center, Rey picked it up and served herself coffee. “Glad to know.”

She walked back to the living room, sitting on the free armchair and kicked up her feet.

Unmoved, Finn and Rose stared at her.

“What?” She growled, sipping her mug of black coffee greedily.

Her roommate released a hesitant laugh, Rose smacking him on the shoulder to shut him up. “Uh, Peanut,” He began slowly. “Not that I don’t love you, but why are you here?”

Rose roughly elbowed him, shooting him an imploring glance.

“What Finn means is we are surprised you’re here, because you said you wouldn’t be back in town until five this afternoon.” She quietly observed the bags under Rey’s eyes and the downturn of her mouth. “Did…did something happen?” Rey didn’t answer, her eye pooling with unshed tears she held for the last eight hours. The couple shared a look. Rose pulled the blanket snuggly around her chest, scooting close to Rey. “Did something happen with Ben? Did he hurt you, force you—”

“No, god no. Ben is the perfect gentleman. *I’m* the fucking arsehole.” Rey croaked dejectedly, crying wholeheartedly into her coffee mug. “I’m the arsehole who knew I was fucking happy and had to ruin it because I was *upset* and I don’t know how to shut up.”

Shuffling over, Rose removed the coffee cup from Rey’s hand. “Hun—”

Rey huffed, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. “I don’t want to talk about it. I just…*I just need* to be…” She felt a firm hand rest on her shoulder, Rey leaning into the touch as she hugged herself. “I said so many *awful* things, and I didn’t—” She hiccupped, feeling the words Ben said reverberating back through her. “*I didn’t mean it.* I didn’t mean what I said—”

“Shh,” Rose breathed, brushing away strands of hair from Rey’s blotchy face. Rey tried to shy her face away, knowing snot and salty tear made a mess, yet Rose did not care. Calmly, she dried Rey’s eyes with understanding eyes. “Honey, you don’t have to explain *anything*. How about Finn and I get dressed and we’ll take you out for breakfast?”

A protest bounding from her lips died when Rey lifted her gaze. Both Finn and Rose stood on either side of her, the former thankfully cover himself. They wanted to help…maybe she needed to shoot down her pride and let them. Let them be the mother hens and overly concerned friends, while she was the emotional mess for once. Strange change of pace, but she’d take it.

“Okay.” She forced a watery smile.

“Don’t fuck this up.” Hux ordered Ben as the two walked beside each other to the conference room.
“Beautiful words of encouragement. You should get it needle pointed on a pillow.” Ben quipped darkly, opening the door for Hux. His grip on his resignation letter and copy of the file Cassian emailed tightened, as he searched for a spot at the table.

Their morning meeting took longer than simply deciding to shut down First Order Literary. They needed a thought out plan, they needed to be somewhat legitimate before moving forward. Mitaka, Ben and Hux got to quick work to put together a business plan and mission statement for The Knights of Ren. Though short, and with its own hiccups, the plan wasn’t terrible. A journal to help get up and coming author’s, specifically aiming towards recent grads and soon to be university graduates. Regardless of Hux’s protests, Ben pushed to include an education based program somewhere in the plan. However questionable his beginnings, towards the end of his life Vader believed in educating the next generation of writers and those in the publishing industry. Their small team of five was proof.

Meanwhile, Phasma and Paige began contacting other trusted, similarly frustrated employees to gage who’d join their fledgling journal—the number was smaller than anyone anticipated. Seven agreed to join, and maybe another ten to consider.

Ben knew they weren’t going to figure everything out in one night, but they were going to have enough to hold each other accountable to move forward.

While scouting the room for a seat, his grip tightened on his resignation letter and copy of the file Cassian emailed. A copy of Vader’s will, explicitly explaining his grandson would inherit his shares in ownership. The other folder in his hand contained the violation of privacy forms Paige processed early that morning—if all else failed, they’d address Snoke’s track record concerning his employees privacy.

Several knowing eyes lingered on him as he went to the seat on the opposite head of the table. Phasma quickly sat in the seat on one side while Hux followed on the other.

“You got this,” Phasma whispered, patting Ben’s wrist.

He nodded once, not finding her words encouraging.

Phasma and Hux were in agreement to follow along with Ben’s plan, however he remained cautious. The editors’ jobs and reputations were on the line—if there was a fallout, they’d be facing the brunt on the backlash. For being ‘close friends’, the two knew how to keep their cards close to their chest.

Undoubtedly, Ben found himself placing his trust in Mitaka and Paige, no matter how unversed they were with the inner workings of compiling a journal. The assistant and head of HR pertained skills far more valuable. Loyalty, honesty, and collaborative attitude. Unfortunately, Ben could not say the same for Hux and Phasma.

After a moment, Snoke entered the conference room, the Praetorian Circle marching in a second behind him. Ben refrained an eye roll; of course the sleazy would bring his donors along with him to the meeting.

“Hello everyone, let’s begin.” Snoke declared eerily slowly yet loud, catching the room’s attention. As the aging man spoke, his accent became far more pronounced than usual when he addressed a crowd.

Ben sat back and waited, listening intently to the lies and false pretenses projected from Snoke.
Pleasantries and announcements were given, followed by discussion of the journal’s progress as a whole. From the corner of his eye, Ben noticed Phasma’s hands twitch as the prospect of another editor being promoted to their team was brought up. Very quietly, the tip of her pencil snapped. Without anyone noticing, she tucked it away in her pocket.

On the other side of him, Hux remained stone cold still and emotionless. Behind him, he heard Mitaka shift his weight from foot to foot. In the corner of the room, Paige appeared to be taking notes, but her intense gaze on the back of his chair told him otherwise. Apparently, they were all waiting for the perfect opportunity to speak up.

“Alright, now let’s think what can we do to improve First Order Literary? Hmm? What did we have problems with? How can we solve them?” Snoke offered to the room, not expecting anyone to speak up. For the last five months, no one dared to speak against him, knowing the power he lorded over the journal.

Feeling terror, reckless and God-given terror, Ben cleared his throat.

“I have a problem I’d like to address.” Ben announced to the room, his gaze locking with Snoke’s beady eyes.

“Mr. Ren, the question is merely a formality—”

Ben stood up, adjusting his glassed by the frame. “I’d like to address how the journal is no longer under your ownership, nor do you need to be the de-facto editor-in-chief.” He spoke clearly, hiding the tremor in his voice.

“Excuse me?” Snoke uttered, his nonexistent eyebrows raising in offense. “Mr. Ren, what nonsense are you speaking?” The old man stood to his full height, though needed to lean on the table for support.

“Vader’s grandson has been found, in fact he’s standing right here.” Ben heard a series of involuntary gasps resound in the room, eyes flickering between himself and Snoke. “I’m Vader’s grandson, and this journal belongs to me.”

Bitter, mocking laughter escaped Snoke, the man shaking his head with a smug smile. “You think I didn’t know that? How much of an idiot do you think I am Young Solo.” He spat Ben’s true surname like a curse. Ben contained his shock at Snoke’s knowledge of his birth name—he did not need the old man to have an advantage. “The Skywalker anger and flare for dramatics runs through you; I noticed it the moment you introduced yourself all those years ago.”

Bile threatened to rise through Ben; Snoke knew. The shady, verbally abusive and dismissive, editor-in-chief, knew of his linage and decided to shove it into Ben’s face. To inflict shame, distrust, fear…Ben did not know.

All he knew was he was a Skywalker and a Solo, and they knew how to talk themselves out of situations as though it were their second language. Not as great as they’d like to be, but passable.

Feeling the foundation for his argument shaking, Ben continued with the regal air he’d seen his mother display. If there was any time to be Leia Organas’s descendent, to be a wordsmith on the podium, Ben hoped his genes for once in his life, worked in his favor. “Then you know the journal is left to me. I have ownership rights—”

“You sound like a child throwing a tantrum, with this talk about owning and what’s yours.” Snoke taunted back, an ugly, sinister grin curling on his lips. “Solo, you’re too late. If you wanted the
journal, you should have spoken up sooner.” He shook his head, his eyes never leaving Ben’s.
“Besides, Vader never owned the majority of First Order Literary.”

“Then who did?” Ben growled loudly, his palm smacking against the table in uncontainable rage.
He no longer cared for their unfortunate audience. Beside him, he felt both Hux and Phasma
standing, watching on with apprehension.

“Benjamin W. Kenobi.”

Lifting her fist to the door, Rey knocked twice. His office hours were posted for the break, the
blocks of green on the weekly calendar letting her know he’d be in his office at this hour. Her long
breakfast with Finn and Rose did little to enlighten, but lifted her spirits enough to address her
current issue with Skywalker.

“It’s open…” Her professor called out.

Stepping into the office, Rey held her high. She mumbled a brief ‘hello’ as she took her usual seat.

“Rey,” He blinked, surprised by her presence. He looked down at his desk calendar, before looking
back at her. “Our next meeting isn’t until Wednesday…”

“Professor…Dr. Skywalker,” Rey spoke evenly, keeping her gaze on the wood grain of his desk.
She just need to be honest, forthright. If anyone could help her, or at least help her see the
pragmatic side of the situation, it’d be Skywalker. “I ran into an issue.”

“About what?” He asked, biting into his avocado and turkey sandwich.

Ignoring his full mouth of food, Rey continued speaking. “First Order Literary…they stole my
nonfiction piece.”

Skywalker stopped chewing, a good bite of avocado in his mouth. “Wha?” He hastily swallowed.
“What do you mean, they ‘stole’ your work?” He wiped his mouth with a napkin. “What the hell
would they want to do with a nobody like you?”

Refraining a harsh remark at the mention of the word ‘nobody’, Rey inhaled sharply. Her eyes
became sharper and her jaw set, frustrated by the man’s nonchalant insult and lack of empathy. “I
mean, my work is was published without my consent, not to mention without my name attached!”
She explained, not noticing how she raised her voice to her professor. “Can you do something
about it?”

Licking his lips, Skywalker gave her a giant shrug. He dropped his hands on his desk with
complacence.

“There is nothing I can do about it, kid. Once it’s out there, it’s out there.” He told her plainly, with
un-invested pity.

She balked at him, her face blanching in disbelief. “But…but isn’t there any advice you can give
me. You worked in the published world before—”

“And it was hell. There is a reason I stopped writing books.” He leaned back in his chair, the
decades old screws and bolts creaking loudly at the movement. Rey’s teeth grinded at the sound.
“And how do you even know it was your piece—the First Order is in New York, Rey. Are you
telling me some on the other side of the country gets ahold of your work?”

“Yes!” She growled, shooting up from her seat, towering over Skywalker. “Someone on the other side of the country does get ahold of my work, and that creepy fucker Snoke snatched it from him!”

Ben may have been careless with keeping her manuscripts in safe hands, but the First Order also violated privacy. Snoke invaded his employees’ emails and offices, coming unannounced in Ben’s office during her visit.

“Snoke? How do you know Snoke?” Skywalker regarded her with apprehension, as though she spoke a foul language.

“Ugh,” Rey grumbled, Skywalker once again proving how beneficial and available he was as an advisor. Determinedly, she reached for his computer monitor, finding his browser open to a list of open tea markets in the greater Central Coast area. Skywalker huffed in annoyance, yet did nothing to stop her.

She rolled her eyes; leave to Skywalker to not be working on his behind grading or with other students while at work. She swore tenure was gift and curse.

Twisting the screen toward her, she pulled the mouse and keyboard closer. Typing quickly, she found First Order Literary’s website, relieved to find Skywalker remained logged into his account. She clicked on the newest issues, the PDF loading.

“See,” She twisted the monitor back around, “Scroll to the last article, its mine.”

Skywalker leaned forward with a frown, squinting in confusion at the screen. “Rey, what am I supposed to be looking at? The PDF attachment didn’t work.”

“Huh?” Rushing to stand over his shoulder, Rey found Skywalkers statement to be true. The PDF didn’t load; she clicked back to the previous page.

The link was completely gone.

Skywalker’s phone pinged. Nudging her away, he grabbed his phone on to the left of his desk. Clicking open his notification, he softly gasped as he read his email.

“I…”

“What happened?” Rey asked, dropping her gaze away from the blank browser screen to her professor.

“The…First Order Literary has recalled all recent mailing of their journal due to a company shut down.” Skywalker blinked slowly, the words sinking in. “My…my father’s company was just shut down.” He lazily dropped his phone on the desk, rubbing his jaw with his free hand. “It’s…” He swallowed tightly, his blue eyes brimming with tears. “It’s gone…and just like that.”

Stepping back, a relived yet confused scoffed rose from Rey’s chest. Ben listened to her—he did something about Snoke and First Order Literary. She just did not expect him to…

“He shut it down.” She slowly sat down in her chair opposite Skywalker. “He actually grew some balls and shut it down.”

“Who?” Skywalker’s eyes focused on her broodingly, as though fearing the answer. “Who, Rey?”
Gratitude and concern battled for dominance in her heart; on one hand she was proud of Ben, grateful he removed her work before anyone else could see it. On the other hand, Rey believed she pushed him too much with her words. Ben didn’t need to shut down the First Order…yet here he was causing waves large enough to be noticed on the other side of the country.

She wanted to hold him in her arms, cocooned in a nest. She wanted to know if he was okay; if he was breathing instead of hyperventilating from the stress. Desperately, she wanted to back with Ben; to take every step of this scary path with him.

Yet she sat in her dickwad Creative Writing professor’s office, believing a literary legend could save her situation if she sked nicely.

Rey wanted to go home. She wanted to go to her home with—

“Ben.” She finally said, one of the weights sitting on her shoulder shifting to take root in her chest. “Your nephew, Ben Solo, shut down First Order Literary. He must have, no one else could have done it.” She shook her head fondly, her thoughts consumed with how frightened by the unknown next steps Ben may be.

Skywalker’s frown deepened, displeased by the news of his estranged nephew.

“You know Ben?”

Rey cleared her throat. “I have a confession to make…”

Chapter End Notes

Is...is Kenobi ALIVE?

How did Ben end up shutting down the First Order? We'll learn some more about it next chapter ;) And I somehow squeezed the Knights of Ren in there; its the journal Ben, Mitaka, Paige, Phasma, and Hux are putting together.

Rey and Ben will communicate in the next chapter. I think this might be the first chapter since the first real chapter Ben and Rey haven't communicated to each other in some capacity--its was weird.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers :D

follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
Who's More Foolish, the Fool or the Fool Who Follows Him?

Chapter Summary

Rey speaks with Skywalker

Chapter Notes

Back from vacation! Reminder: I did post a chapter while on vacation, so if you haven't read Chapter 18, go back and read it!

This chapter is very Rey-centric.

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Let me get this straight—you somehow met my nephew on an online forum and he’s the one who’s been helping you with your assignments.”

“He gives exceptional constructive criticism.” Her professor did not react to Rey’s defense, merely staring at her unblinkingly. “Ben’s compassionate and thoughtful; he tries not to be malicious… Ben’s honestly brilliant.” She mused adoringly, her voice ebbing into serenity the longer she spoke of him. “I can truthfully say he has become one of my closest friends; I’d trust him with my life…” She trailed off, a daydream of Ben’s joyful, hearty laughter coming to mind.

“I see…” He acknowledged, blue eyes keen on her dazed manner. Sheepishly, she tucked loose strands of hair behind her ears.

Skywalker’s entire face pulled into a confused frown, unamused and stoically hardened. Oddly enough, he reminded her of the Grumpy Cat meme, his greying beard and hair resembling the popular cat’s coloring.

Coughing, Rey hampered down her snort.

“I think it’s clever you sought out help from other sources.” Skywalker complimented sagely, though not without a curmudgeon bite. “People who are meant to help you don’t always…finding a way to solve your problem independently and collaboratively is a skill artists need to achieve anything in their life.”

His words settled in the room, neither one speaking as Skywalker waited for Rey to respond.

Rey did not know how to accept this…praise? An uncomfortable twinge twisted inside her at the thought of Skywalker honestly praising her abilities—well her abilities to find a teacher who was ultimately not him. He did not seem bothered by the idea, yet the word ‘proud’ was too bold to describe the stillness of his presence. Content suited his demeanor, only effected by the mention of
his nephew. Not the slightest upset about anything other than.

A brutal thought came to mind; did…did Skywalker want her to hate him, enough to find…

“Excuse me, but I’m confused.” Rey’s eyes narrowed on Skywalker, daring him to contradict her. He did not flinch away from her undeterred hold. “Are you saying you wanted me to find another teacher—that—that was your goal?”

“Precisely.”

“Fuck you.” She spat, stunned yet not completely finding the idea farfetched.

“I think my nephew would prefer to do that.” He quipped, unfazed by her curse. He leaned back, kicking his legs up on his desk. Uninterested in her gapping expression, he continued his meal.

Avocado dropped on to his shirt, Rey’s nose wrinkling in disgust as he did not make a move to clean the food off his shirt. At this point, she should have become accustomed to Skywalkers sloppy qualities—especially since she herself was a sloppy individual—but something about the man’s indifferent attitude spiked her nerves.

“You really are an absolute dick.” She breathed, her mind trying to wrap around the fact her professor purposely yet unintentionally shoved her towards Ben. Clearly, Dr. Skywalker never intended her new teacher to be Ben, but someone else out in the world. Someone who was simply not himself. “Do you hate me that much, or are you that much of an insolent bum?”

He huffed through his nose, finally picking up the piece of avocado from his shirt. Examine it for a second, he popped it into his mouth. “The world’s not against you, Rey. I didn’t not want to teach you.”

“Then why didn’t you?” She growled, her hand tightening on the arm rest of her chair.

“I knew after our first class I couldn’t teach you.” He shrugged, dropping his whole wheat crust on to a napkin. “You did every prerequisite reading and were the first person to turn in the summer assignment. A month and a half before its due date.”

“Because I’m a diligent student.” She rebuffed tersely. Skywalker did not like she was a prepared student, or worked hard to prove her worth—then that was his personal problem. Professors loved Rey; though occasionally late to class, she participated in class discussions, wrote thought out and detailed responses, did every single reading.

Not to be conceited, but she was a professors dream. Yet Skywalker despised this quality, dispassion by her zealous efforts.

“You were more than diligent; nearly borderline obsessive, I almost marked your email as spam with the amount of messages you sent me about the seminar—and we had yet to have the first class.” A mocking laugh of disbelief escaped Skywalker. Rey’s face pinched at the sound.

Ultimately, he found her to be a hot-headed pest. The professor she idolized for years, disliked her before their first meeting. So she was just imagining things…he earnestly did not like her, and decided to make it worse over time.

An ugly prickle began to creep behind her neck; she sat taller, shying away from the uncomfortable reality. “It’s because I care about my education and my future as a writer.”

“It’s because writing was more than life to you. It is life, it is your ambition,” The word twisted
into a foul being, Skywalker detesting the sound coming from his own mouth, “to be the best and expect everyone to be to your caliber.”

“Well, it’s a competitive seminar…” Rey mumbled, not trusting her voice. She didn’t want to end up saying more than she already regretted.

“Rey—I cannot contain such an attitude or raw talent you possess. I tired once with Ben, and he outgrew my methods less than half way through the semester.” Rey knew the unspoken part of the story; Ben grew frustrated with his peers and the pace of the course. Along with other problems within his family and his anger issues, being told he was not experiencing the seminar to its fullest potential probably did no favors for him. He was contained with others who did not understand him, and forced to workshop with those he did not care to put effort to understand or slow down for—which led to unfortunate outbursts.

Feeling the waves of disappointment from her, Skywalker leaned forward with a tired smile. “You’re talented Rey, and have so much potential…but I could not make the same mistake twice.” He grimaced, eyes downcast. “You needed an outlet, someone else to help you at your pace—a push in the right direction. I knew you were smart enough to find the right person to help you.”

“But that wasn't your decision to make.” She replied stiltedly, finding her voice through Skywalker’s accusations. “I chose to be in your seminar—”

“And you hated every minute of it.” He bluntly interrupted her. Rey recoiled back, hands gripping the edge of the armrests. “I know you did because it did not meet your expectations.”

Offended did not begin to describe how Rey felt, her animosity towards the man flaring. “You’re saying you ran into the same problem with Ben? That’s why you were hard on him, pushing him to be better, but never telling him he was enough? Beyond enough?”

“Yes and no.”

“It can't be both.” She stood up, unable to sit still any longer. “You didn’t want me around because I reminded you too much of your nephew—a nephew you carry guilt about because you were an arsehole to him—to someone who needed you.”

For the first time ever, Skywalker glared openly at her, Rey feeling all the displeasure he experienced in her presence. “I always admired your spunk Rey—fierce independent woman. At least that’s what your peers claim. It’s a shame you let yourself be tricked by pretty dark eyes.”

“How can you—” She shook her head, biting her lips together. Determined, she lifted her gaze back to Skywalker. “I thought you want to fix things with Ben. How you talked about him…”

“Let me put it into mechanic’s terms; how can you fix something that had a malfunction during its manufacturing?” Rey stood silent, her teeth grinding together the longer she stood before him. “You can’t. Ben and I will always have a rocky relationship, a little girl batting her eyes at him or trying to become a teacher’s pet will not change that.”

“He’s changed—”

“Don’t come to class or to our meeting on Wednesday.” Skywalker commanded with a wave of his hand. “You’ve already fulfilled our end of the deal—three weeks remember? Three weeks of one on one workshop.”

Rey felt her stomach drop. “And you are still kicking me out of the class?”
“Nope, I simply don’t want you in workshops.” He replied, void of emotion once again. The agonized writer and professor had been shadowed by the indifferent, vacant man. “You have someone as your second eyes, you don’t need me. Just make sure to email me the final drafts of your assignments and I’ll upload instructions for the last few assignments on the course drive.”

“That’s it?” She inquired, the remained hope she had for Skywalker flickering in and out of existence.

Skywalker nodded once, resuming his lunch.

Her hope in him diminished, out without his lack of comment.

Shuffling out of the office, Rey did not spare her professor another glance. She kept her head down as she walked through the hall to the end of the building. Off blue linoleum blurred together as she picked up her pace, the pain of Skywalker’s rejection of not only herself, but Ben resting in the center of her chest. Tears were not the answer; unrelenting determination to prove Skywalker wrong about his nephew was her goal. Ben deserved a second chance with his uncle; he needed a second chance with his family.

Not until she was outside did Rey notice the heavy pelts of rain. Stopping on the bottom step of the English Department, Rey sat down, not caring if she became soaked to the bone.

Ahch-To rain soothed her, clouds a blue-grey of an unnamable hue. Her home away from home.

“Rey…no offense, but where did you get that awful shirt?”

From her cocoon on the couch, Rey peered down at her over-sized shirt—a cartooned Edgar Allen Poe, with a speech bubble attached saying ‘Let’s get Lit!’ . It wasn’t hers, but Ben’s. A shirt he loaned her at some point during his visit, which she then kept for herself. The fabric still smelled of him, even after three days of wear.

“…And when was the last time you took a shower?” Finn asked, dropping his backpack by his feet before taking a seat on the opposite end of the couch.

“Since…” Rey averted her eyes, embarrassed. Busying herself, she played with a loose thread of her grey blanket.

After leaving Skywalker’s office, Rey walked back to her apartment in the rain. A walk she enjoyed, however her journey left her with a slight cold. For the last three days, she inevitably wallowed. In Ben’s shirt and her Slytherin pajama pants, she camped out on the couch.

“Oh, come on Rey.” He groaned, flopping back against the cushions. ”You’re acting like you two broke up or something.” He turned his head to her, friendly eyes soft with understanding. “It was just a fight—call him, apologize, and then thank him for saving your ass.” Picking at the bowl of popcorn Rey had lying beside her, he grimaced. “You burnt the popcorn again, didn’t you? I knew it smelled weird in here.” Nevertheless, he stuffed an ungraceful hand full into his mouth.

“You’re making it sound like it’s easy.” She grumbled turning her attention to the television screen; Audrey Hepburn’s character—Anna—was examining her hair in the window, contemplating a haircut on her unplanned excursion through Rome. Grasping for a tissue in her pants pockets, Rey found snot infested crumples instead. Throwing out what little dignity she had left, she swiftly wiped her runny nose on her blanket.
“Gross.” Finn pointed out, mildly repulsed.

“I’m sick.” She sniffed. “I can’t call him when I’m sick.”

“Sure you can.” Finn implored, nudging her shin with the toe of his shoe. “I’ve seen you do a seven hour shift while sick with the stomach flu. You can call him.”

Reaching blindly to her left, she snatched her bag of saltine crackers from her food pile. She shoved a couple in her mouth, chopping noisily. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Finn becoming miffed at her deflections. He crossed then uncrossed his arms several times. Pushing himself upright, he faced her.

“Rey, nothing worth having is done easy.” Finn said quietly, pulling the crackers from her lap. “Do you think I liked not being with Rose—taking a break?”

He chomped loudly on the crackers, the food somehow becoming the best ice breaker.

“Of course not…” She pouted, feeling for both her friends. They were helplessly in love with one another, yet decided to not be together for a while. Which confused Rey at the time…but sitting like a bum on the couch for the last three days, Rey realized being in love made you do weird things.

Like wearing the guy’s awful nerdy shirt and watch his favorite movie on repeat all day. She even went as far and bought Roman Holiday on Amazon when she realized it wasn’t on Netflix or Hulu.

“…But you and Rose are different—”

“Every couple is different.” He shrugged. “We needed time way from each other because we did not know how to communicate our feelings to each other, and spoke with action.” Rey did not have the heart to argue when Finn spoke the truth—he and Rose were initially a whirlwind romance. Quick to fall in love, quick to move their relationship in the fast lane. Unfortunately, Finn did not know how to fall in love any other way. Time away did serve them well, Rey seeing the difference in their relationship during breakfast on Monday. Gag-worth nicknames were gone, but tender touches and loving smiles replaced their slots. Their lust and idealizations stabilized into a tangible relationship. “Your relationship with Ben was formed entirely on communication.” He smiled a bit, as though a little proud of the connection she made with Ben. “A lot of people can’t say that.” His sternness then appeared in a blink of an eye. “Not talking to him is probably the worst thing you can do right now.”

Rey pressed her lips together…when did Finn become the wise one?

She placed the new attribute to Rose.

---

Rey

Hey
In the middle of the chaos of shutting down First Order Literary, Ben found the chime of ‘SLYTHERIN’ from his phone to be a breath of fresh air.

A breath of fresh air he did not know how to inhale.

Rey…Rey messaged him. After nearly three days, she was reaching out.

Ben did not know what to do.

After all, she did leave after their rather …vicious argument. But she also said she loved him…and he loved her, despite the words they shared.

With shaky hands, he tapped out his reply.

---

Ben

Hey

Rey

Hey

Rey

Shit, I already said that

Sorry

Ben

It’s alright. ‘Hey’s are cool.

‘Hey’s are fine.

Rey

Cool.

Ben

Cool.

Rey

Are you just going to repeat everything I say?

Ben

No.
Oh, okay.

Did Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn ever hook up?

What? No. Why would you ask that?

I’m watching Roman Holiday, and it occurred to me
They could have totally banged especially with the height of adulteries in the era.

You’re watching Roman Holiday?

Yes

It slowly becoming one of my favorites.

It’s a great movie.

Can we talk about what happened?

Yes.
Rey

But I’d rather not do over text.

Rey

I feel like things might get worse if we try to communicate over text.

Ben

I completely agree.

Ben

Can I videocall you instead?

Rey

Of course.

Rey

What time works best for you?

Ben

In fifteen minutes?

Ben

Is that too soon? It’s just this is the first time since Monday I’ve

had time to myself and I don’t know when Mitaka will be

barging with another problem.

Rey

It’s great.

Ben

Perfect.

Flinging her cell phone down on the cushion beside her, Rey threw her nest of blankets of her and
ran out of the living room. On her mad dash to the bathroom, she collided with Finn, her roommate
startled by her sudden surge of energy.

Finn held Rey steady, her wide panicked eyes causing a rise of concern. “What are you—”

“Ben’s video calling me in fifteen minutes and I look like shit!” She shoved past him, her
roommate stumbling a foot or two.
A grin bloomed on Finn’s face at the news. “I told you to take a shower hours ago.” He said, turning to Rey. She scowled at him.

“Shut up and just pick out nice clothes for me while I take a shower!” She called from the crack in the doorway, the sound of the running shower fitting for dominance. Without considering her strength, she slammed to door shut.

Decency out the window within the first month of living together, Finn flung the door open not a second later. “Did you just tell me pick out your clothes?” He winced at the sight of her—her pajama pants were already kicked off and the Edgar Allen Poe shirt crumbled by the sink, she stood partially naked with glasses falling down the slope of her nose.

Rey groaned, struggling to get her sports bra off and over her head. “Yes, I did! Now go be a good roommate and get me clean clothes.” She muttered as she successfully freed herself from her sports bra, Finn slapping a hand over his eyes once he caught sight of more skin than necessary.

“Thank the Lord for Ben Solo!” Finn cheered, dropping his hand when he heard the shower curtain close. His dream was finally coming true; dressing his best friend, Rey in flattering clothes. Not that he didn’t love her band t-shirts, ripped jeans, and oversized hoodies—they were all very Rey. But to finally dress her up, nicely and for a man no less. He needed to send Ben a fruit basket—okay, maybe not a fruit basket, but a gift card to Barnes & Noble—for his unintentional good deed.

“No worries Peanut, I’ll pick something that’ll really show off your tits!”

“Get out!” she ordered heatedly, a couple of soap bottles tumbling over in her punctuation.

“Remember to take of your glasses off—you’ll get water stains.”

“Damn it.”

“Rey, sit still,” Finn grumbled as he tied Rey partially wet hair out of the way. She tried her best not to get the top of her head too wet, but did not think of the loose strands falling out from her bun.

Under a time crunch, Finn tried his best to pull Rey’s hair back into a neat ponytail.

“He’s already seen how I look in the morning—he honestly won’t care how my hair done.” Rey dodged Finn once she felt the hair tie go taut behind her.

“You two have slept in the same bed?”

The opening chords of There is a Light That Never Goes Out by The Smiths came from Rey’s phone. The two jumped at the music. Their eyes landed on the vibrating phone on the coffee table.

“It’s him.”

“I don’t know what’s more emo; you changing his ring tone to The Smiths, or the fact he’d be emo enough to serenade you with the song.” Finn licked his thumb, wiping away a smidge of Rey’s mascara. “There, all good.”

“He doesn’t sing.” Rey told him as she reached for her phone. A picture of Ben standing on the Brooklyn Bridge, frowning at the harsh wind lit up her screen. Locks of his hair whipped his face, yet a tenderness lingered in his eyes. Days later, Rey realized he’d been gazing at her while she took the picture. “Now leave, please.”
Holding his hands up in surrender, Finn backed out of the living area until he reached his bedroom. Summoning her courage, she swiped the green icon… And Ben had the phone angled the wrong way—*again*. All she saw was some of his hair and the corner of his glasses.

“You need to have the selfie camera facing you—”

“Yup, got it.” He muttered, the phone shaky in his hand. His long face came into view, the dark bags under his eyes the first thing Rey noticed. His mused hair and unbutton blue shirt were the next, Ben thoroughly not put together. She knew he struggled to sleep, but he looked like he hadn’t experience proper rest in days.

Sitting down on the edge of the couch, Rey pursed her lips. Neither was sure who was to speak first.

“Hi.” Ben started, pushing hair out of his face. “How have you—”

“I’m sorry.” Rey blurted out, “I’m so fucking sorry. I said shitty things, and it’s been playing on loop in my mind for days.” She groan miserably, rubbing her temple.

On the screen, Ben blinked widely, as though he’d been woken up from a nap, she the ray of sun shining through the window.

“Why—why are you apologizing? I should be apologizing—”

“You both should be apologizing!” A voice called away from the camera. Ben’s wiped the side of his face heavily.

“Shut up, Mitaka! I am trying to have a private conversation.” Ben called back at his intruder. He looked back at Rey, suddenly bashful in her presence. Adjusting his glasses higher on his nose, he sat taller, finally addressing her straight on. “I really am sorry, and I didn’t mean a word I said. I was upset because you were upset—”

“I said some pretty cruel words, but I didn’t mean any of it either.” She reassured him. “I took it out on you; I shouldn’t have done that.” Rey felt budding tears in her eyes. Another blink then two and the pools came down in two gentle streams. She wiped them away with the pads of her fingers.

“I think there is enough guilt between the two of us that it’s best we just let go…of everything that was said.” He nodded slowly. “Plus I don’t think I can go a few more days without talking to you. And Mitaka isn’t the greatest conversationalist.”

A water chuckle bubbled through Rey, her runny nose coming back in full force.

“Damn it.” She reached for one of her used tissues shucked on the couch. She quickly wiped her nose.

“What’s wrong? Are you *sick*?” Ben leaned in closer, probably noticing the paleness of her cheeks and rosy tint on her nose.

Rey shrugged, “It’s a cold. No big deal. Anyways, I was saying I’m—”

“No,” Ben insisted, licking his lips in thought. “No, I needed you to say those things or I might not have ever…” His gaze dropped down, and released a disgruntled huff. His eyes lifted back to the
camera. “It’s been an eventful few days.”

“Shutting down First Order.” Rey remarked with a hint of pride.

Ben’s head tilted, “How did you…right you’re a subscriber.”

“I…thank you.” Rey breathed. On the screen, Ben seemed to release a bit of the tension bunched in his shoulders. “Thank you for pulling my piece back. I never meant to pressure you, you didn’t have to do what you did.”

“I know,” Ben swallowed, “But I wanted to.” A blithe smile inched its way on his mouth, though disappeared in a moment. “How…how would you feel if I told you…” He trailed off, dropping his chin in his palm. “How would you feel if I told you the First Order didn’t really get shut down?”

“What do you mean?” Rey asked, “I read the email. I thought you did. How could you not?”

An empty laugh at his misfortune came through her phone speakers, “I was able to shut down production and recall the latest issue, even get Snoke out as editor-in-chief…but I can’t shut it down.” He informed her, utterly helpless in the turn of events.

“Why?”

“Because Vader never owned the majority of the company; Benjamin W. Kenobi did—well does.”

Rey froze at the implication. “You used present tense.”

“Yeah, because somehow…the old fucker might still be alive and I can’t shut down the journal without his consent.” Ben grumbled, finally making eye contact with Rey. From the intensity and deep weariness in his eyes, Rey knew Ben was absolutely miserable.

“You’ll find him.” Rey declared without hesitation. “Wherever he is, you’ll find him.”

He smiled sadly at her, “You put too much faith in me.”

“And you don’t put enough.” She retorted.

Chapter End Notes

Major things revealed on the Rey and Skywalker front, while Rey and Ben sort of talked it out. They’ll talk some more in the next chapter, this merely the awkward transition to get their footing again.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers.

Follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
Rey woke with a ragged gasp, her chest rising and falling rapidly.

Swallowing lung-full of air, she gagged at her cotton mouth. Pinching her eyes closed, then wide
the outline of her room in Ahch-To solidified in the linger shadows of the night. By the door, she
noticed BB sleeping on his back, little legs kicked in the air—*dead dog sleep* as Rey liked to call
the position. On her desk, the Ancient Greek History term paper she’d been working on was dimly
lit on her laptop, adjusted to nightmode.

A pool of warmth longing rested unsated within her; exasperated, Rey flopped on her stomach.
Dropping her head in her pillow, she release a groan. Lack of relief coiling inside her further proved
the reality of her situation.

She wasn’t in Brooklyn with Ben. She wasn’t chasing a climax, fisting his smooth hair, begging
him between languid moans for *more*.

She was alone, in a cold sweat. Well, she was alone, *needy*, and in a cold sweat. Now all she could
think about was Ben’s large, calloused hands holding her bucking hips steadied as he rested
between her legs. An image her active imagination came up with on a whim. Her subconscious
should have known it wasn’t *real*, especially when they were both wearing ancient Greek garb in
her fantasy. Though he did look devilishly handsome in a himation, his well-defined chest and
torso exposed.

God, when did she become a longing fool in some trashy romance novel sold at CVS?

Pushing her pillow to the side, she found her phone. Pressing the home button, the blinding bright
lockscreen photo of BB stared back at her. The ungodly hour stood out in bold black font.

“*Fuck.*”

Shucking off her pile of blankets, Rey sat up. Feeling sweat dry on the small of her back, she
decided it best to take a shower, even if it was….she glanced back down at her phone…*two in the
morning*. Lazily, she lifted her fist to rub the remaining sleep from her eye, only to knock into her
glasses.

Shuffling out of her room, Rey blinked at the honey glow of the hall light. “Finn, why are all the lights on? We have an electrical bill…” Walking down the hall to the living room, Rey froze at the sight of their unexpected guest.

“Oh, sunshine. Long time no see!” Finn’s uncle, Lando Calrissian greeted from the arm chair, dressed in his usual colorful three piece suit. A gorgeous royal blue, without a thread out of place. Charming smile and suave presence, Rey sometimes wondered how her roommate could have such a relative.

Pulling her sweater sleeves by the cuffs, Rey crossed her arms over her chest. Awkwardly, she stood by the hall entrance, mostly an effort to hide her braless and sweaty state from both Finn and Lando. She was dressed for lounging around the apartment and finishing a term paper, not hosting posh investor uncles who loved to arrive unannounced.

In the few years Rey knew Finn, she encountered his Uncle Lando a total of three times. First, for Finn’s twenty-first birthday—Lando came to celebrate, taking all of Finn’s closest friends out for a bar hop in the city. He even went as far to provide a fake ID for Rey once he found out she was eighteen at the time.

Second, when he picked up Finn for a summer internship with his company during their sophomore year. Lando took her out to lunch along with Finn when he discovered she’d be staying on campus for the break; he snuck her more than few hundred bills to put down on the old junker Falcon she’d been saving to purchase. A fixer-upper, but a project she was rest to dive head first into.

Then once when she moved into the apartment; the ever generous uncle insisted on paying for movers to help her. She though it too much, Lando claimed it was not enough.

Needless to say, Lando for some obscure reason liked her, and occasionally called her his niece. Not to mention he insisted on setting her up with his other nephew whenever he visited—not his blood relative, but his godson. She turned down the offer every time.

From behind his uncle, Finn shrugged, trying his best to balance two mugs of coffee and a tray of snickerdoodle cookies Rose brought the previous night. Clearly, he did not expect his Uncle to show up on their door step either.

“Hi Uncle Lando,” Rey smiled tightly, eyes bouncing between nephew and uncle. “Um, not to be rude…but what brings you here at two in the morning?”

A breeze laugh escaped the greying man, “I am meeting a potential client in Monterrey, thought I could take a drive up the coast rather than deal with any air travel.” He busted off invisible dirt from his lapels, relaxing into the arm chair. “Didn’t think it through unfortunately; I started getting tired a few towns over when I decided to call Finn to take a pit stop.” Smiling graciously at Finn, he picked up a cookie delicately.

“Snickerdoodle.” Finn muttered when Lando sent him a questioning look. “My girlfriend, Rose made them.”

“Ah, Rose,” Lando winked at his nephew. Turning back to Rey, he observed her openly. “Finn was just telling me about your latest endeavors. Is it true you work for Han Solo?”

“Yeah,” Rey said, rocking on the balls of her feet, “I do work for Han. Have been off and on for
the last few years.”

Lando took the offered mug from Finn. “He and I go way back, I’m hoping to stop by tomorrow to catch up. Especially with everything his son has gotten up to.” He shook his head with a smirk, “All those Solo’s are the same. Getting into more trouble than necessary.” Despite his words, Lando seemed amused, his lips curling into a knowing grin.

Finn unable to keep to himself, perked up at the mention of the Solos. “You know about Ben?”

Rey’s eyes widen a fraction at the mention of her…*long distant lover (?). How the hell did Lando know about Ben? Only a few select individuals knew about the current First Order chaos; herself, by default Finn, and Ben’s parents. Well, he did not come forth and call Han, Leia had to relay the information.

“Of course I do, he’s my godson.” The familial connection hit Rey with both common severity and brazen lackluster; of fucking course, Lando was Ben’s godfather. One he never mentioned, but an issue she did not have the energy to be bothered by. The universe must be sadistic, trying to push the she and Ben together when they were forced to be miles apart.

Lando glanced up at Finn, affronted, “How did you not know that?”

Tired, uncomfortable, and aggravated by the presence of their newest guest, Rey turned on her heel and marched to the bathroom without little goodbye.

---

Rey

Have you ever dealt with an uninvited guest?

Ben

Yeah

Ben

Pretty sure that was you for a moment.

Rey

Yes, I wasn’t invited, but I was absolutely welcomed.

Ben

Okay. You can tell yourself that ;) 

Ben

But yes, I understand.

I currently have invited guests who don’t seem to understand personal space.

Rey
At your place?

Ben
Yes

Rey
That’s a tight squeeze.

Rey
Please tell me your not sleep on that tiny sofa

Rey
Because you’re 6’2” frame cannot Compact into 5’.

Ben
I’m not really sleeping at all.

Rey
I feared that

Rey
I mean, you answered my text and its what 5am there?

Ben
Yeah, something like that

Ben
Hey, why aren’t you asleep?

Rey
I was, then I woke up.

I wouldn’t be sleep texting you.

Rey
Wait a minute. Is that even a thing?

Ben
Sleep texting? Probably—but I know for a fact you don’t.
Ben

You sleep like a log. Seriously, I’ve never seen anyone
sleep all the way through the night like you do.

Rey

You watched me sleep?

Edward Cullen much?

Ben

You know what I mean.

And I am not going to even comment
on that Twilight reference.

Rey

Saying ‘I’m not going to comment’ is in fact comment itself.

And how did you know it was a Twilight reference? Does the great Ben Solo read Twilight?

Ben

No.

I have never been more offended in my life by such an accusation.

Ben

I never read it, but I was in college at the height of its popularity.

Went on a date in a with girl—Tiffany, I think— who insisted on going to
see the second one? Blue Moon?

Rey

New Moon.

Ben

Now be honest Rey, how did you know that?

Were you a Twilight fangirl in your teenage years?

Rey

NO.
Rey

The movie was on Finn’s post break-up heavy rotation.

Lots of shirtless men turning into wolves makes him feel better.

Ben

Honestly don’t remember anything about the movie.

You can tell me there was a unicorn in it, and I’d believe you.

All I remember was that the date was

awful—And I have not gone on a movie date since.

Rey

If it makes you feel better I have not gone on a movie date at all.

I actually don’t remember the last time I went to the movies.

Ben

Are you telling me you live in Ahch-To, for what 3 years,

and have never gone to the drive-in?

Rey

What’s a drive-in?

Ben

I can’t believe this.

Rey

Seriously, what’s a drive in?

Ben

I really can’t believe this.

Rey

Ben, tell me what a drive in is.

I really don’t want switch windows and google it.

Ben

Fine. It’s a place where you drive your car, park it,

and watch a movie on a giant projection screen.
Rey

That’s it?

Ben

What do you mean ‘that’s it’?

YOU ARE WATCHING A MOVIE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN CAR.

It’s awesome.

Rey

But how would you even hear the audio if it’s a projection?

Ben

From the radio in your car.

Rey

But wouldn’t that kill the battery?

Ben

No, you don’t need to leave everything on.

Rey

But why would someone want to watch a movie in their car when they can just go to a movie theater, where they are inside?

Ben

It’s about the EXPERIENCE.

Ben

That’s it. When I go visit, I am taking you to the drive-in.

Rey

You’re going to visit?

Ben

Well, yeah.

Ben

I mean this is how it works, right?
You visited, then I’ll visit.
We’ll keep rotating.

Rey

So you’ll what, visit this upcoming month?
And then I’ll visit you the next?

Ben

I guess.
I’ve never done a long distance relationship.
Or really anything long term.

Rey

Well, I haven’t done anything relationship wise so…

Ben

So….we’ll figure this out as we go.

Rey

Exactly.

Ben

Right.

Rey

Just to clarify—we are dating correct,
because we never had a clear conversation about this THING.

Ben

Yes, we’re dating. We are in a romantic relationship.
Unless you don’t want to be.

Rey

No, no, no I want to be.
In a romantic relationship. With you.

Ben

Okay, just making sure we are clear
Because I thought the implications were there when you shipped yourself to me and tried to do a dramatic movie kiss.

Rey

Don’t say I shipped myself to you. It sounds like I used fucking FedEx.

I flew, in a plane. With other humans.

Ben

Fine, when you visited.

Happy?

Rey

Yes :D

Rey

Not to sound dopy or anything, but I miss you.

Ben

I miss you too.

Ben

Even your drool.

Rey

Shut. Up.

Ben

Please tell me you wash your pillow.

Rey

That’s it. I don’t miss you anymore.

Ben

I am just looking out for your hygiene, Rey.

Rey

Me and my drool are going to bed now.
So you’re okay then? To go back to sleeping like a drooling log?

Rey

Well, sleeping like a log as you say takes great practice.

I use to be on edge, sometimes still am, when it comes to sleeping.

Rey

It must mean I trust you or something if I slept the whole night *rolls eyes*

Ben

I am honored to receive such privilege

*bows dramatically*

Rey

Wouldn’t give it to anyone else

Rey

837475893.jpg

Rey

See? Fine.

Ben clicked on the attachment. The image opened revealing a groggy looking Rey, her hair was down and wet—possibly from a recent shower. The ends fell to her slightly exposed collarbones, her night shirt slipping to reveal her left freckled shoulder.

Sans glasses, her head was free to be tucked against the grey pillow. From the angle, he noticed she was laying on her side, the wall behind her in clear view. A collage of movie posters made up the wall; *Avengers, Stranger Things, Pride & Prejudice & Zombies…*

And there towards the bottom corner of the image, the right cut off was *New Moon* amongst them.

*The little…*

With a tap, the phone’s dial tone began, Rey picking up before it reached its full cycle.

“What?” She yawned, Ben hearing her shift and fluff her pillow.

“You liar—I see a *New Moon* poster behind you in the picture.”

“It was given to me as a joke, arsehole.” Rey grumbled, a smile edged in her voice. “And you’re being a creeper again.”
“No, I am judging your movie poster selections.” He chuckled, reclining into a more comfortable position of the sofa.

“Same difference.”

“Ben, do you own anything other than French Roast? Possibly a selection of tea?” Jyn Andor-Erso asked as she riffled his kitchen cabinets on Saturday morning. She and Cassian arrived the previous day, the latter to assist on legal matters concerning First Order’s impending shut down. Initially, Hux insisted on his father's team of lawyers to be their representatives. Ben ceased the potential argument claiming Cassian had ties to Vader, and possibly the only one who would be able to help figure out their ‘Kenobi Conundrum’

As an author and professor, Jyn genuinely did not need to be there, yet she tagged along for the unfortunate visit. Based off of Cassian’s mutterings and fleeting comments, Ben grew reason to believe Jyn was becoming unhinged living under the same roof as her father. Tagging along for a visit must have been an escape from Galen Erso’s affectionate smothering. Helicopter parenting embodied an entirely new meaning for the ailing man, keeping tabs on his married daughter as though she were still the reckless, daredevil teen who’d get secret tattoos in the dead on the night.

“I am pretty sure that is the most British thing you have ever said to me in the eight years we have known each other.” Ben spoke up from behind his laptop, clicking through some of their leads.

As it turns out, miniscule amount of individuals possessed the surname Kenobi; a total of five to be exact. Rey included in the shortlist. Rolling his eyes, Ben sharply crossed her name off the legal pad. She definitely did not have a real connection to Kenobi, adopting the name about four years ago.

“Uh, I think there might be some Earl Grey buried in the pantry,” Ben answered, recalling once buying it in effort to cut down his caffeine consumption, substituting some of his cups of coffee with cups of tea. It didn’t work.

Jyn gagged at the mention of Earl Grey. “God, no. I’m not a heathen. I’d rather have coffee.” She walked back to the corner of the kitchen where Ben had his coffee machine set up. While pouring her drink, she eyed her host warily. “Hey, when’s the last time you’ve slept? Those bags under your eyes are starting to make a permanent home.”

Ben halted mid-yawn, dropping his jaw into his palm. “Honestly, I haven’t had a full night’s sleep since Sunday.” He did his best to ignore how the last time he slept a good eight hours had been when Rey was curled under his chin, and drooling on his chest.

“That’s nearly a week, Ben,” Jyn sighed. Thoughtfully she sipped her coffee, making her way to the open dinning chair across from him. “We can’t have out leader sleep deprived.”

“I don’t want to be a leader.” Ben groused, clicking and unclicking his pen absentmindedly. Another obituary of Benjamin W. Kenobi was displayed on his laptop screen. All traces of him stopped in 2010...last heard to be writing a sequel to The Scavenger and The Lost Prince before his death.

“All of us don’t want to be a lot of things, yet here we are,” She tapped her finger idly on the rim of her mug. “Sometimes I wonder what it would be like for Cassian and I to change our names and run off to some exotic—”
“What did you just say?” Ben interrupted, his mind latching on to Jyn’s mid-morning musing. She frowned at him, “About an exotic island—”

“What about changing your name.” He pushed the pad with names to Jyn, “What if Kenobi changed his name? Like you said, decided he no longer wanted to be who he was and killed off himself?”

“I feel like you’ve read one too many crime novels.” Jyn chastised, picking up the legal pad. Perusing the shortlist, she tsked. “I find it odd that there’s only five people to ever have the surname Kenobi.”

“What?” Ben squinted, rubbing his eyes tiredly.

“Each of these persons don’t have any family with the name ‘Kenobi’.” Jyn pointed out. “Rian and Kathy Kenobi are accountants in Canada. They changed their surname when they were married, both wanting to cut ties from their families. Then there’s Joseph Kenobi—the baseball player.”

“Oh, yeah—wasn’t his really name Joseph Adams or something?” Ben considered, closing his laptop shut slowly. “Then there’s Rey Kenobi, a college student who changed her name once she was out of the foster system.”

“Yeah, your girlfriend.” Jyn smirked cheekily, chortling as the tips of Ben’s ears became bright red. “I don’t see you arguing with my statement.”

“Yes, she and I are….romantically involved.” Ben finished stiltedly, uncomfortable discussing his and Rey’s relationship with Jyn. Though the woman was one of his oldest friends, she had a teasing streak. Pesterimg him like an older sister. Back when she and Cassian first started dating, she was unfortunately trapped in the honeymoon phase longer than others. She’d try to set him up on various dates with her friends or co-workers, determined to help him find a happy relationship such as her own. Unfortunately, this was not the case, Ben forced to go on a series of disastrous dates until Jyn realized her efforts were futile.

With the news of Rey, Jyn relished in the opportunity to tease and gripe, making up for the lost years.

“I heard you two on the phone last night….well early this morning” She grinned, poking his forearm. “I don’t think I have ever heard you laugh as much as you did talking to her.”

“Well…she is special. More special than I think she realizes.” He muttered, forcing himself to focus on the task at hand, rather than Rey’s bright eyes or infectious laughter.

Tenderly, Jyn wiped a false tear from her eye, clasping her free hand to her heart.

“Awe, my Benny Boy’s all grown up!” She cooed, Ben swatting away her hand as she tried to pinch his face.

“Stop harassing Ben, Jyn.” Cassian Andor groaned into his yawn as he shuffled into the kitchen. He served himself a gracious amount of coffee, picking up a donut from the box Ben acquired earlier that morning. His conversation with Rey went on longer than expected, Ben deciding to forgo sleep and take a walk. His feet led him to the donut shop a few blocks away. “Let him like a girl peace.” Jyn’s husband encourage, taking a bite from his old fashion donut.

She rolled her eyes, sipping her coffee. “Everyone deserves a good teasing.”

Ben shrugged while Cassian harrumphed in disagreement.
“Anyways,” Her focus landed back on the list, her eyebrows pinching together sympathetically. “It looks like you might be trying to find a ghost.”

“He should be alive,” Cassian declared as he came to sit in the available seat next to Jyn. “If he wasn’t, his last wishes in his will would have already been set in motion.”

“What if he doesn’t have a will?” Jyn countered, stealing his donut.

He shook his head, dusting off the glass from his hands. “Nope, a man with this many assets has a will.”

“Then we need to find him.” Ben said, twiddling his blue pen between his fingers. “Find his true name, and either convince him to take action or sign over his shares.”

Cassian frowned, rubbing at his day old stubble. “It’s going to take time, Ben. Several phone calls and waiting. An abundance of waiting.”

“Then I’ll wait.” He stated simply. The couple before him shared a look.

“And what will you do with First Order Literary in the mean time?” Jyn asked, genuinely curious. “You’ve halted production, and essentially closed up shop…”

“Limbo, I guess.” Ben huffed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

Limbo seemed flimsy, yet the only adequate description. No more journals were sold, all the stage had been effectively let go…most employees happier than others. First Order Literary slowly became hell for all who worked under Snoke’s tutelage. Long hours, pay cuts, lack of creative freedom…Ben had not been surprised when multiple co-workers stated they had jobs lined up, merely waiting for their own contracts to expire.

In an odd twist of events, Ben saved the heart of First Order Literary by killing the journal. If only he knew how to save himself from the technicalities; the weight of Kenobi and Vader.

“Then we’ll start looking.” Cassian gave him a comforting smile. “I know some people who can help—Jyn’s cousin, what’s his name?”

“Bodhi.” She supplied, her lips down turning at his name.

“Same cousin who can take your fortune?” Ben smirked recalling the entire ‘last name cannot completely change’ fiasco, her father put her through.

“Yes.” She scoffed into her mug dejectedly. “He’s not even a true Erso; my Great Aunt Lynn adopted him or something—I don’t know and I don’t care.” She dropped her head into her folded arms, releasing a half-hearted scream.

Gently, Cassian rested a hand on her shoulder, rubbing soothing circles to calm her. “Yes, Bodhi. He’s a P.I. who owes me a favor. He can look into it.”

Ben hummed, dropping his eyes to the table top. “Thank you,” He mumbled, raking a hand through his hair. “It’s been…chaotic these last few days.”

Jyn and Cassian’s familiar faces and banter consoled Ben. Reminded him of the days before his family’s messy tangle of life disrupted his own carefully arranged routine. The Knights of Ren were great, and worked surprisingly well together…yet there was something warm about sitting with his closest friends and talking, teasing, and eating. Like he was Ben again, not Vader’s
grandson or the partial owner of First Order Literary. Ben who liked to drink too much coffee, never slept, and made nerdy references.

He liked that Ben. Rey liked that Ben. Jyn and Cassian liked that Ben.

Then why did it feel he was slowly getting caught in the Skywalker web he painstakingly cut away from?

“Eh, it was either this drama or family drama.” Jyn joked, stretching back up from her shell. “We decided some much needed Ben drama was needed.” She smiled cheekily, standing up to take her empty mug to the sink. Pausing, she turned back to Ben. “You need to tell me more about this other journal…I think you might be on to something, Solo.”

“Just send him a nude!”

“I knew I should have just asked Rose.” Rey groaned pitifully in her menu.

“He’ll send you one right back!” Finn continued, scaring away one of the ducks waddling by.

Rose whacked Finn’s shoulder “Keep your voice down, there are people.” She gestured lightly to the rest of the patio, various families and couples eating their lunch peacefully. Warf Hut was one of the few establishments in downtown Ahch-To within their budgets, a nice little patio café off the Ahch-To Bay pier. Both women at the table preferred to continue to enjoy meals without Finn effectively getting them banned.

“Rey, you don’t have to send him a nude if you don’t want to.” Rose reassured her, patting her forearm. “No one says it is required for long distances relationships.”

“But a lot of people do it,” Finn once again butted in, earning a flick behind his ear. “Fine I’ll shut up to stop the abuse.”

Rose rolled her eyes.

“It’s not the sending him a nude thing that’s well, that bothering me.” She shrugged helplessly, playing the peeling edge of the laminated menu. “It’s…” She exhaled slowly. “I’m a virgin.”

“What?”

“I knew it!”

“Shut the fuck up, Finn!” Rey hissed, tossing her menu at him.

“What?” He asked mid-laugh. “I always had a feeling you were virginal. Especially after everything you said to Jessika on your birthday.”

“I said stuff to Jess? What stuff?” Rey stressed, pushing her sunglasses up on her head. Her hazel eyes glared at Finn. “Finn, you told me I didn’t do anything stupid while drunk. You promised.”

Her roommate quaked under her stare, knowing exactly how much Rey bench pressed at the gym. She’s snap him like a baby twig if she so liked, and with little effort.

“You may have told her you found her revolving door of guys a little obsessive—and kind of gross, and may have thrown something about self-esteem in there, I honestly don’t remember.” Finn
sputtered out quickly, gulping for air. “I tried to remind her you we’re our baby. You didn’t know what you were talking about since we all kind of assumed you didn’t care for romance or sex.”

He wasn’t wrong. She’d never been in a relationship, nor found any interest in having sex with anybody with a pulse, despite any bothersome biological urges. People and feelings made relationships complicated; her life was complicated enough considering her distant family and her own lingering trust issues. Adding someone else to the equation seemed cruel. She was an independent woman, who owned a vibrator (though rarely used), and would date when she found time. A man wasn’t necessary to achieve happiness.

Of course, falling for Ben made her a hypocrite on this matter.

“No wonder she doesn’t talk to me anymore.” Rey grumbled, understanding why Jessika had been somewhat avoiding her for months.

Finn nodded solemnly. “Yeah, Rey. You slut shamed her.”

“Finn.” Both Rose and Rey growled, unamused by his unsavory ways to relieve tension.

“He means, there is nothing wrong with being a virgin.” Rose countered, “Remember, the main topic of conversation?”

“Did you guys seriously share a bed and not sleep with each other?” Finn asked instead, chewing on a cold french-fry from their communal basket.

She nodded, “Well, we almost did, but he didn’t have a condom and I forgot my pills.”

“He didn’t have a condom? All sexually active men should have condoms.” Finn squinted at her. “Maybe he’s a virgin too?”

“What? No, have you seen those abs, the fucking body. No way in hell is he a virgin.” She scoffed with a shake of her head. Picking up her chocolate milkshake, she sipped the remains greedily. Finn and Rose shared a look, then looked smugly back at her. “Why are you guys staring at me?”

“Finn and I have a theory,” Rose broached the topic gradually, resting her clasped hands primly on the table. “We think your boy has never been laid due to Neville Longbottom Syndrome.”

“I beg your pardon?” The beloved character had absolutely nothing to do with Ben.

“Neville Longbottom Syndrome is when a man who use to look dorky and unattractive, grows up to be a hot, hunky piece of eye candy.” Finn explained clearly and professionally, crude comments aside.

Rey pursed her lips, leaning back into her chair with her hands splayed on the table. “And this has to do with Ben because…”

“Because, let’s be real honey. He needed to grow into his looks.” Rose stated matter-of-factly. “And from what we can tell, he was a nerd and preferred books to real people.”

“But he’s gone on dates.” Rey defended. “And he is handsome.”

“Anyone can go on a date.” Finn waved off.

“But he probably doesn’t realize other people find him attractive because he grew up as a Neville Longbottom and therefore has never been laid because he has been stuck with this mentality his
entire life.” Rose concluded watching Rey apprehensively. “Does that make sense?”

Rey bit her lip, not wanting to entirely believe it.

“Think of the facts Rey—awkward, adorkable nerd. Has never been in a real, long term relationship. Didn’t have a condom with him…”

Actually, now that she thought about it….maybe Finn and Rose weren’t wrong. He never discussed his past romantic history…because he didn’t really have one. Similar to herself, Ben was work oriented and tried his best to figure out his own issues; to understand himself better. One of the reasons they clicked was because they were not only honest with each other, but attempted to be honest with themselves in their friendship.

“He might be a virgin.” She breathed, this fact not bothering her as much as she anticipated. Sure, ideally she’d like her partner to have some experience. She knew first times were awful, her friends relaying stories throughout the years. Some cried, some didn’t orgasm, most thought it too bland or awkward. Someone with a little experience might stop some possible nightmarish situations.

Though the idea of figuring it all out with Ben didn’t seem too bad; they already fumbled around and had to stop due to circumstance, yet the rest of the night wasn’t a disaster. They still slept in the same bed and acted normally. Maybe because she loved him, maybe because she trusted him, maybe a combination of both.

“Did you know people who don’t have sex until they’re twenty-three or older, often marry their first serious partner?” Finn shared a meaningful look with Rey, “You could be his wife by this time next year.”

Any other witty retort died in her throat at his comment. She…she never thought of marriage. Not once. For most of her life, she never thought marriage would be an option, her goal just to make it to the next day.

Silence filled the table, Rey resolving to shove a handful of fries into her mouth.

November 11, 1980

Kenobi and I finally came to an understanding. We agreed a separation is what is best—neither of us see the same vision for the journal. He desperately wants to focus on the art of writing…while I shared a similar viewpoint, it simply cannot be done. We need the funding to continue the journal, and our newest editor and investor, Mr. Palpatine can provide. He has…questionable methods and there are whispers of his unsavory money, but we must do what must be done.

Kenobi and I have poured too much of our lives and souls into this project to let it die in our own miserable hands.

Despite dear Kenobi’s departure, for a failsafe I did agree to sign over a quarter of my shares of the company to him. The break now 75/25 in the case of matter’s worsening Kenobi would have the right away to completely disentangle the company if need be.

I pray we never need to resort to such matters.

~Anakin Skywalker
The pad of Ben's index finger brushed his grandfather's name. He'd never seen the names together...never considered Vader to be a mask for a suffering Anakin. The red leather journal called out to Ben as he tidied around the apartment. Jyn and Cassian had gone off to buy groceries, the two planning on making dinner as a thank you for their last minute crashing at his place.

His eyes hardened on the date; it'd been a week and thirty-eight years since his grandfather wrote in the first page of the red leather bound journal. Inhaling deeply, Ben sat down and turned the page.

Chapter End Notes

There was fluff, mystery and a little comedy in this chapter :D A nice little break from the emotional rollercoaster we've been experiencing, right? But of course, I had to end it with the journals.

We also found out who Jyn's distant cousin is; Bodhi! How many of you thought I'd be Rey? Well, I have other plans for who her own distant relative may be.

And Kenobi's real name is not 'Kenobi'?!? I wonder what it could be...

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers!

follow me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97
“Excuse me?” Ben gently set his dishes in the sink, balancing his phone between his ear and shoulder. Leaning against the counter, he held the receiver closer to his ear. “After all this time of ignoring my calls, not answering my text messages my rogue mother decides to finally talk?” He said condescendingly, “Tell me Leia how is life in the month you’ve been gone?”

“Stop that,” His mother commanded, Ben huffing dejectedly. “I hear enough annoying snarkiness from your father, I don’t need it from you.”

“Can we please not talk about him?” He countered bristly, finding the gout of the tiles fascinating in their conversation.

“Fine—but the least you can do is thank me for sending your girlfriend to you.” She responded primly, Ben able to picture the defiant purse of her lips and goading dark eyes.

He rolled his neck and at up straight, an old habit of childhood when his mother pinched and jabbed him to be ‘a good young man’. “Thank you moth—”
“No, no, no. I want to be thanked at your wedding. I want to say I was the reason you and Rey got together in the first place.”

“But you weren’t.” He corrected as Jyn and Cassian sent him curious looks from the living room. He waved them off, heading towards his bedroom. Knowing his mother, he never knew what she’d dig up to throw back into his face. Her mind was a whip and cracking, growing with agility as she grew older.

“No one needs to know you two met online,” She scoffed, “It’s embarrassing, Ben.”

What right did his mother have on saying how he and Rey me? She was the one who had the embarrassing story when it came to meeting future spouses.

“Many people meet online now, mother.” He clipped back. Glancing around the room, his eyes landed on his glasses case sitting on his tall dresser. When he was eating, he finally noticed the smudge on the corner of his glasses. This is why he needed to take them off before dozing off—

“Anyways, I’m moving.”

“What?” His fingers stumbled, almost dropping his phone. “Did you just say you are moving?”

“Do you need to get your ears check? When was the last time you had a physical—”

“My ears are fine,” He grumbled, sitting down on the edge of his bed. “What do you mean you are moving? You have a house in Kensington!”

Leia sighed softly, “After some thought, I decided I want to move back to Ahch-To.”

“Because of Dad?” Ben mumbled, suddenly feeling seventeen again when his parents were explaining they were separating and ultimately divorcing—once and for all.

“No.” She replied evenly, “I love your father,” He winced, “I will never stop loving him, but I don’t think we will get back together.”

“Then why do you want to move?”

“Because I miss it.” She spoke softly, Ben able to hear the faint howl of the wind from her end of the line. “Because our family is here…your father, Maz, Chewie, Luke—”


A confused chuckle escaped his mother, “Yes, where else would he be Ben?”

“I…” He sucked in air, feeling his lungs tighten at the mention of his uncle. “I don’t know. I just thought he’d still be in Ireland. Which seems stupid now considering he went on sabbatical six years ago.” Ben rubbing his eyes tiredly, trying his best to not think too hard on the subject of Luke. The mention of his uncle still caused an unsettle churn in his gut after seven years of estrangement. “But…moving?”

“Yes, son.” She confirmed, “The house is still here, though needs a good cleaning—your father is not the cleanliness person in the universe.” He rolled his eyes at that; growing up with Han Solo as a father came with its misgivings, such as a messy tendencies. Nothing purposeful, but mild absentmindedness. Not realizing when food would go bad or the last laundry were done the worst among them. Once Ben wore the same two t-shirts for a week because it was finals week at the university, his mother busy grading paper and exams and Han not noticing in his own casual chaos.
Luke noticed on the Thursday and taught him how to do his own laundry at seven years old—‘If you’re ever going to want to get out of here, learning how to do your own laundry is a must, Ben.’

“But what about your non-profit?” Ben tried again, thinking of the small after-school arts non-profit his mother invested in when she moved. Apparently her parents were patrons of the arts, and wanted to give back to the community in their name.

“You mean the one Poe practically runs on his own?” She chuckled softly, both she and Ben knowing this to be the truth. Leia might have provided the funding from old money, but Poe did the day to day work and met with the students. He invested his time and administrative expertise—not to mention loved his work. If there was one thing Ben had to admire about Dameron, it was his life and dedication towards his job and cause. “I have been calling realtors these last few days,” She informed him pleasantly, Ben biting back on any other response. His mother clearly made her decision. “But I think, since you are a grown man and the house was acquired through my Organa family inheritance, you should have it.”

Ben blinked, unsure if he heard his mother correctly. “You’re giving me your house?”

“Well, your dog lives there,” She huffed, not exactly the biggest fan of Trixie, but housed the dog for her son’s sake. “The commute to the city isn’t terrible, not to mention I hate the hole in the wall you live in—seriously Ben, your no longer some twenty-something hipster—”

He balked at the term. “Do you even know what ‘hipster’ means?”

“More than you do, no doubt.” She snipped, never one to be considered ‘behind the times’ or ‘old’. “Anyways, you’ve made it perfectly clear you’re not coming back to Ahch-To—I’d just feel more comfortable knowing you lived in a safe area.” She stressed sternly, sounding more like a worried mother than she’d been in the last year. “Hopefully, you’ll get married soon and have children, so you should have a home.”

“See, I knew this conversation would round itself out that way.” Ben groaned petulantly, flopping back on his bed. “Mom, I’m not getting married any time soon.”

“You say that now!” She scolded loudly, Ben shying away from his phone with a grimace. “But stranger things have happened; Han and I date for two months before we got engaged—”

“You eloped. I don’t think calling the three days inbetween an ‘engagement’ is adequate storytelling.” He corrected, hearing the story of his parents union enough times to reiterate it in his sleep. Leia and Han met through the unfortunate events of Luke almost freezing to death, didn’t get along at all, and practically loathed each other. Then, one road trip later, they somehow fell in love in the confines of his dad’s junker of a car. He didn’t need to know the details, the unforgiving use of innuendos in his family was sufficient information for Ben.

“Oh, hush. Your grandparents eloped too!”

“Bail and Breha? Doesn’t sound like them.” In fact, Ben know for fact his Organa grandparents had a long ‘courtship’ as his mother explained whenever he asked about his family history as a child.

He finally caught a slip up…or maybe she always slipped up, but Ben never noticed because he never knew. He never knew anything before and suddenly everything about his family’s history before his birth seemed to have a double meaning, shaded in beige and greys.

“Ben, I meant—”
“You know, I know right?” He decided directness was the best approach to stop this muddled conversation.

A hefty sigh—a sigh full tense years and tight lipped secrets—escaped her unevenly. “*Ben*…”

“Did you think I’d never find out—”

“I don’t want to have this conversation over the phone. This is something we need to discuss as a family.” She deflected, Ben hearing the unspoken words of his childhood—*‘Let’s put a pin in this conversation, son’.*

“I’ve been waiting for you to get back!” Ben sat up straight, trying his best to control his breathing. He wasn’t going to get upset, or have a panic attack now. *Not now.* Not when he needed to be an adequate adult while speaking to his mother. She needed to see he could do this, even if it were over the phone. Despite his issues, Ben knew he had the right to know about his maternal grandparent. “I have been waiting for you to get back for weeks to discuss this!”

“Well, if I came back when I originally planned, you and Rey would have never met in person.” His mother shot back tactfully, deciding to play the newly developed ‘Rey Card’.

“She has nothing to do with this conversation—you have enough frequent flier miles to come back, but you didn’t—”

“If I went back—if I go back, son…I don’t know if I’d ever make the decision to stay in Ahch-To.”

“Then maybe you shouldn’t live there.” He tried once again, a tremor of panic in his voice.

“Ben, I have sacrificed so much for you, for everyone—let me for once do something for myself.” She spoke tightly, a brief waiver of sternness as she finished speaking. “I love you, son. I love you so much, but at some point I need to stop being your crutch when it comes to your life out there.”

“Mom, I’m not…” He winced, squeezing his eyes shut. He loved his mother—he honestly did. Leia Organa was stubborn, strong willed, but one of the most caring individuals he’d ever know. She gave him space when he needed it, and was the only blood-related family member he adored. Despite their initial distance after they both moved East, she helped him move forward with his life—more importantly supported him in seeking help. A fleeting thought crossed his mind—did she purposely stay nearby to watch over him? To make sure he wouldn’t have another detrimental outburst of anger.

After several therapy sessions, he understood the concern…he lived with the calm concern his mother radiated whenever she spoke with him. While he enjoyed the semblance of independence, he indulged his mother. Let her insist on dinners together in the beginning, until…Well, she kind of became one of the few people he saw throughout the week. And maybe Rey was right; he did hide at his mother’s house whenever possible and preferred to be away from the center of the city.

Maybe this was Leia’s own way of pushing him to fully become his own person. Force him to make major decisions on his own…by simply not being around for him to run to when hard times rolled his way.

“Okay.” He breathed.


His eyes focused on the painstakingly crafted vision board on the wall above his desk.
“I want you to create a vision board,” Amilyn declared, “I want it completed by the time you come back for our next session.”

“A what?” Ben frowned at her, his mind thinking of those Pinterest crafts. Growing up with writers, he’d been exposed to other arts, excelling in painting and eventually falling in love with the patience of calligraphy. Despite this, he’d never been one for crafting. He wasn’t a middle aged mother, nor did he enjoy the frivolous colors and prints involved with artsy, self-discovery projects. Weren’t burlap and mason jars always involved in these type of activities?

“A vision board,” She repeated, “A board of how you want to feel, your dreams, and desires… what you love, who you love.” She smiled softly at his sneer at the mere mention of love. They’d gone over previous romantic relationships in their last session; typical protocol during the first month with a new therapist. He’d been to plenty to know.

“Why?” He uttered, completely disinterested in the assignment.

“To help you remember what matters most when life gets a little difficult.”

Initially, he hated the assignment; he thought it was Amilyn falling into her dreamer-like and hippy self-discovery journeys she sometimes liked to give him. Such as sitting in silence and discovering the color of his soul…

…Then he did some research and discovered he didn’t need to make anything ridiculous or colorful. Just something encouraging and pleasing, where he’d be willing to look at the board every day.

Quotes and forgotten pictures displayed the board—pictures of his mother, Trixie, Jyn and Cassian, even Hux. On his desk, a newly printed picture he took of Rey smiling brightly with spaghetti sauce splattered on her shirt, sat at the ready to be added to the board. Quotes from authors were written in delicate and bold calligraphy amongst the photos.

His eyes focused on Hemmingway’s; Courage is grace under pressure.

“I am planning on visiting Rey sometime soon, we can have a family discussion then.”

“Why don’t you come for Thanksgiving? Arrive sometime next week—I’ll even get your ticket.” She offered, her voice full of hope.

“I—”

“I’d be the first Thanksgiving we’d all have together in years, Ben. We can even celebrate your birthday!”

“I have to think about it.” He spoke gently, not wanting to crush his mother’s plans entirely.

“Okay…think about and let me know. I believe visiting Ahch-To will do you some good.”

Rey

Why did you ask me about blue and red?

Ben

What?
Rey

You asked me to pick between blue and red forever ago.

Rey

I told you red.

Ben

I don’t remember this.

Rey

Really?

Ben

I honestly don’t remember asking you to choose between red and blue.

Rey

But you did, and it’s been bothering me for weeks.

Like why would you need to know?

You don’t exactly radiate colors, let alone blue or red.

Rey

And I mean this lovingly.

Ben

Yes, I am greatly offended you don’t think I radiate a bright color.

Ben

It’s like I accidentally wear dark colors, and accidentally purchase things in the same drab color palette.

Ben

I don’t do any of this on purpose, at all.

Rey

Stop it. I just snorted in class.

Ben

You’re texting me while in class?
Ben

Rey...breaks the rules. I am positively stunned.

Rey

Stop it!

Rey

I can hear you voice doing it all in deadpan like you do
And it’s really funny but I can’t laugh because
the lecture is on the Peloponnesian War.

Ben

Ancient Greeks is still a required course?

Rey

Yes *rolls eyes*

Rey

I decided to be bold and take the online course,
with limited face-to-face. Only problem is once it hits
midterms students are required to sit through
the two hour lectures we did the independent course work for.

Ben

I hated that class. Though I would have done the online option if it were available
when I was a student there. Mostly because the prof would drone on and on about
the ancient traditions.

Ben

Does San Tekka still teach it?

Rey

Yes. He is actually lecturing right now.

SOMEONE GET ME OUT OF HERE.
Well you see I would…but I can’t. You can probably zone out for awhile and he wouldn’t notice. He really gets into the lectures.

All you really need to know is Athens won and became the political power house of the ancient world.

Rey

Great. Everything I already know.

Rey

How about you? What are you doing right now that is probably ten times more riveting?

Ben

Taking care of some paperwork and looking over the books for First Order Lit with an ‘accountant’ and lawyer.

(My accountant is Hux—he is actually really good with numbers and helps with my taxes)

Ben

Apparently, there are a bit of extra things to take care of when shutting down a business. Like canceling licenses and permits, as well as paying off any further debts.

Rey

Even without Kenobi’s input?

Ben

Yes—things are stated very clearly in the contract set between Vader and Kenobi that all action can be taken, but the final step of dissolve process must be done by Kenobi himself. Which is basically signing of on ‘hey, were officially closed’

Rey

Weird. Like really weird…like ghost level weird.

Ben

I know. It’s ridiculous trying to find the guy.
Ben

Did you know there are only four other people in
the world with the last name Kenobi. And none of them were
originally born with the last name.

Rey

You mean Kenobi isn’t really a Kenobi either?

Ben

Yeah…crazy right?

Rey

I guess.

But also kind of really cool, I mean all
of us presumably chose our last name.

We’d essentially be cousins and relative by choice
if we’d ever wanted to get in contact.

Ben

I got to agree, it is cool.

Rey

Plus, Kenobi is a badass last name.

I wouldn’t want to be anyone else but Rey Kenobi :)

Ben

A badass last name for a badass person.

Rey

That’s right ;)

“Hey kid, you got a moment?” Han called out from his office doorway.

Reaching a good place to pause her work on rotating the tires of a car, she set her tools aside and
tidied up her work space. Wiping her hands on a nearby rag, Rey walked over to the open office
door.

“What’s u—Oh hello, Leia.” Rey blinked, waving a little greeting at the woman sitting behind the
desk. Off to the side, Han leaned against the wall casually, though his quirk of an eyebrow told her this was more than a casual meeting.

“Hello dear, why don’t you take a seat?” The question didn’t leave much room for argument, Rey taking the available seat across from Leia. The woman smiled pleasantly at Rey, a twinkle of determination in her eye. “Han was telling me you didn’t have any plans for Thanksgiving.”

“I uh, usually don’t,” She shrugged, “I don’t really celebrate it—it’s kind of another freebee day for me since classes are cancelled for the majority of the week. Why?” Her eyes bounced between the former husband and wife, Leia’s smile holding form while Han seemed to slump deeper into himself with each passing second.

“Well, we’d really like Ben to come to Ahch-To for the holiday—” Rey opened her mouth to speak, but Leia continued on, her eyes sharpening on the younger woman. A silent dare to interrupt. Swallowing, Rey did not feel the urge to take the challenge. “Especially this will be the first Thanksgiving we’d be able to have it all together like a family again, along with the move—”

“I heard,” Rey blurted out ungracefully, finally able to wedge her way into the seemingly one way conversation. “Ben…” Han groaned in the back of his throat, as though the mention of his son’s name was physically painful. Without hesitance, Leia patted his right elbow comfortingly. Her brown eyes remained trained on Rey, waiting for her to continue. “Ben, mentioned to me the other night about…well about your move—”

“And how did he sound?” She asked, the worried urgency in her voice noticeable.

Carefully, Rey thought out how to address Ben’s reaction—she couldn’t tell his mother he cried. Yelled, then cried some more, before finally talking it out slowly. Rey tried her best to comfort him over videocall, but pressing finger kisses to her laptop screen did not have the same effect as pressing a kiss to his pulse point.

He explained the situation slowly, Rey feeling his surge of emotions were coming from overall stress rather than his mother simply leaving. He’d been wound up tight from the previous weeks’ events, pent up energy and exhaustion was finally ebbing out in unfortunate ways.

Not to mention, he slept no more than an hour or two a night since she left.

“He is himself. Busy with work, but doing alright.” She stated plainly, neither Han nor Leia buying her answer by the flat look they shared. “He told me he’s thinking about your offer. Honestly.”

She was a fucking liar. His exact words were, “If she wants to spend fucking Thanksgiving with me, she can come home. If I am going to Ahch-To it is to visit you, and only you.”

In other words, he was not think about taking his mother’s generous offer. Quite the opposite.

“Oh,” Leia murmured, possibly not fully believing Rey, but listening closely to her. “Well, since you two are involved—”

“They’re dating, you can say it.” Han interrupted with a smirk, looking the slightest bit joyful since Rey entered the room. “Which, can I say I’m glad it’s you and not some random nobody.”

Rey flushed, not expecting a compliment from Han, about dating his estranged son no less.

Leia cleared her throat, glancing at Han with a fond shake of her head. “Anyways, since you two are together, I’d thought it be best if you can convince him to visit.” The older woman ordered, Rey nearly saluting her at the fierce authority of her statement.
“I—” Rey gapped, grappling for words that were no longer there.

“I told you not to do this,” Han huffed, crossing his arms. His frown reminded Rey distinctly of Ben, recalling her significant other standing in such a manner. “Look you broke the kid, and she’s on the clock for another hour!”

“I—I don’t know if he’d listen to me—”

“He’d listen to you. He’d hang the moon for you if you asked.” Leia answered briskly, every word coming out of her mouth sounding as factual as the next.

Ben’s feelings were intense—anyone knew this coming within a few feet of him. He radiated emotion like a wildfire, his dark eyes and pale, youthful face a constant give away to his true thoughts and opinions. Being with him towards the ending of weekend, Rey knew he was honest and true in his intentions towards her. Every fond word and gentle caress true; doubt not once lingered in her mind… yet to hear someone clearly state how obvious his feeling for her were—well that was a little too personal.

“I’ll talk to him! I promise.” Rey declared before standing up, blood rushing from her head to her feet. She needed to get out of the office before Ben’s parent’s embarrassed her further. “Now excuse me, I have some tires to finish rotating.”

Ben

Hey, I’ve been meaning to ask

what is your next writing assignment?

Rey

My next writing assignment?

Uh, not due until the 20th.

Rey

It’s a short fiction piece again—actually flash fiction.

Ben

Oh, cool.

Ben

When are you going to send me the rough draft?

Don’t you have a meeting with your prof on Wednesdays?

Rey

Actually, the requirement was three Wednesdays and I fulfilled it.

And even did an extra one for good measure :)}
Ben

So are you back in the class?

Rey

Sort of.

Ben

What does ‘sort of’ mean?

I though the deal was do the one-on-one workshops,
then you’d get back into the class.

Rey

Yes, but we are so far into the semester
and I have worked independently for so long,
My prof is not making attendance a requirement

Ben

So you’re not workshopping with anyone?

Well, besides me.

Rey

Rose and I meet up once a week to discuss, but that’s about it.

Rey

I can send you something by the end of the day.

Ben

Sounds good.

July 23rd 1981

...Kenobi’s recent letter brought me great worry and pride. My son, Luke has begun his studies, my dear friend Kenobi one of his instructors. Though I have never been close with my children, nor do I ever expect to, it brings me joy to know they are successful, living to their fullest potential. I can rest assure Kenobi will watch over the twins while they attend university, and inform me of any misgivings that may occur. Not that worry about the children in this capacity—they’d always been diligent, smart, and ambitious. This is merely the next step in their lives.

One can hope their own flesh and blood will take on the family business...though I do not believe neither mine nor Kenobi’s children will possess such desires.
Luke and Leia, while talented in their own pursuits have never seemed interested in the publishing world. Luke possibly, but from what I can perceive, he may not have the tenacity nor thick skin to run a business, even though it is a literary journal. There is more to it than simply picking pieces to publish.

And Kenobi’s and Satine’s daughter’s distain for me and our family is enough of an answer on that particular matter…

Ben slowly reread the last paragraph, shrugging his shoulders loose; he’d been sitting on the sofa for three hours, pouring over his grandfather’s journals. By Wednesday the first red leather bound journal was read in its entirety, Ben moving on to a forest green journal. Most of Anakin’s musings were off his children—neither one aware of his existence. A crippling lonely existance where he watched his only children grow up from a far, a few trusted sources informing him on their gradual progress into adulthood.

Deep down Ben desired to feel pity for Anakin, yet knowing his mother and uncle experiencing the same shock of relation he did caused a new sense of companionship. A familiarity he never once thought he’d express, especially with his uncle. Though the thought of a young Luke discovering his father—meeting him…and a young Leia possibly denying whole heartedly—Anakin made mistakes—mistakes he regretted, his words weeping on the parchment. Weeping for his children…for his best friend…for Padme. Love seemed to never die for their family once ignited.

Ben feared yet cherished this implication.

Picking up his phone from the coffee table, Ben frowned at the time. Half past two in the morning—his Thursday night officially a Friday morning…he also found Rey tried to call him ten minutes ago. With a quick tap, he called her back.

“Sorry, I was reading,” He greeted once she answered.

“No—” A soft yawn interrupted her. Ben winced; he must have woken her up. “No problem, I just needed to talk to you real quick.” Rey mumbled, her voice laced with sleep.

He stood up slowly, the phone pressed to his cheek. Each muscle cried at the movement, but relaxed once he began to move about the apartment. Water seemed to the best option at this time of day, all other caffeinated drinks hidden from him by Jyn. The couple finally found a place to stay while Cassian helped settle matters with First Order Literary. While Ben insisted they did not need to stay in the area, Jyn claimed the trip her and Cassian’s honeymoon, the couple never taking the time off to have one.

Though Ben knew Jyn and Cassian’s extended stay had more to do with missing the city than celebrating their marriage or helping him with legal matters.

“Okay, shoot.”

“You should come visit. I mean I know we talked about it a little, but I think you should,” She yawned again, a rustling of blankets filling the background, “For Thanksgiving—and before you start listing all the reasons you shouldn’t, I want you to consider that I will also be on a brief break,” A little yawn sounded for the third time.
“Go to bed—we can talk in the morning.” Ben felt a smile bloom on his lips, imagining Rey’s bed head and bleary eyes staring back at him. Her hair would be all over the place, dried up drool on the corner of her mouth…

“No!” Rey argued, bristled by his suggestion. “No…We can talk now. Anyways, I think you should because if things go downhill, you can still crash with me and we can make-out until you feel better.” She slurred her words together, the end of her sentence muffled by presumably a pillow.

“Being with you anywhere would make me feel better, we don’t even have to make-out.” He assured her, already brightening up at the prospect of simply sitting with Rey all day. Sitting doing absolutely nothing. Or sitting together playing a game or watching a movie or reading a book. Being in her company in general…Sleeping beside her, holding her—well she holding him, because someone didn’t like being the small spoon.

He did miss her…and his mother did say she’d purchase his ticket.

“No, I’d want to…you have a nice face to kiss, Ben. I like kissing your face.” She mumbled and made what sounded like…kissy noises?

Ben snorted. “Okay, you must be sleepy if you are sounding like a drunk.” Stepping out of the kitchen empty handed, Ben decided to head to bed.

“I had a long day… classes, on demand essays—who the fuck came up with on demand essay’s Ben? I wanna have a nasty word or two…” Ben nodded along knowing very well Rey could not see him. Pulling the phone away from his ear, he typed out a quick text, Rey’s senseless chatter continuing without halt.

Ben

Mom, you can get the ticket. But I need to come back on the Monday after the holiday.

MOM

Great! Your flight’s booked. I’ll send you the details later.

He ignored the stream of emoji’s his mother sent him after her initial response. Instead, he pressed his phone back to his ear.

“…and then BB thought it’d be nice to have happy little accidents all over the apartment.” Rey spoke softly, the malice of her earlier statements fading into simple, dazed commentary. “Ben…I think you’re right. I’m tired.”

“Same, I’m going to go to sleep now.” He told her, climbing into bed. Reaching over, he shut off the heart lamp, the room swathed in darkness.

She sighed happily. “Really? I’m glad, you don’t want to look like a sleep deprived tall child.” A half giggle escaped her, before she stopped, her exhausted body no longer able to produce the delightful sound. “I love you, Ben. Bye.”
“Love you, bye.” He said adoringly back, his joyful expression falling into sincere ponder.

Her breath evened out on the line, Ben ending the call.

Setting his phone down on his nightstand, he laid back into his pillows. For a moment he let himself be enveloped in the silence, the faint enclosure of the dark. Could he do this… late night phone calls, talking at odd hours…not being able to hold each other close—close enough to feel her heart beat into the steadiness of slumber beside him.

Closing his eyes, his doubts withered away, sleep finally coming into fruition after nights of fitful trial and error.

---

Insistent knocking from the front door woke Rey.

Lifting her head, she groaned at the time displayed on her laptop screen saver. Ten in the morning. Her shift at the autoshop didn’t start until two o’clock; later than usual for a Saturday shift, but Han insisted she take the morning off. Due to this unexpected development, she was not planning on getting out of bed until at least an hour before.

“Finn—” Her shout for her roommate died in her throat. _Right_—date with Rose, and didn’t come back home. That meant she had to be the adult in this situation.

Shoving her bedding away, Rey grabbed her worn beige sweater and pulled it over her head. Glasses were put on as she stumbled out of her bedroom. She winced at the knocking, the person clearly did not have any respect for whoever many be sleeping.

“Coming!” She shouted as she reached the door. Fumbling with the locks, Rey was finally able to twist them open. “Damnit, do you not—” She gapped at the man in front of her, her sleepy brain trying to compute why he was standing there…on the other side of her door in Ahch-To. “Wh-what are you doing here?”

“Hi.”

---

Chapter End Notes

Just to clarify, because I see a little confusion in the comments-- Rey and Ben's phone conversation takes place on THURSDAY NIGHT. A day has passed since the phone call, Rey waking up on SATURDAY MORNING.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers!

Love you, bye!
Oh, My Dear Friend, How I've Missed You

Chapter Summary

We find out who was at Rey's door.

Chapter Notes

Here you go!

If I haven't responded to your comment yet, I will soon!

Also, if you've never listened to Panic by The Smiths-- GO LISTEN TO IT NOW. It's mention at one point in this chapter.

Typos will be fixed throughout the week

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

From the other side of the doorway, Rey frowned at Mitaka.

Out of anyone who’d arrive on her doorstep, Ben’s scrawny assistant was furthest from her mind. Not to mention she never informed him of where she was from nor where she lived. He’d only be able to know if Ben told him her address.

Ben.

Mitaka was here and not Ben.

An unnecessary panic sprouted in her chest.

What if something happened while Ben finished dissolving the First Order and he would not be able to come see her, instead sending Mitaka in his stead to tell her the news? Or worse, something awful happened to Ben and pipsqueak Mitaka had to inform her of his disease or injury or—

“Wh-what are you doing here?” She said, her voice creaking slightly.

As he opened his mouth to respond, a loud grunt of struggle sounded behind him. The two jumped, Rey moving further out of her apartment. Pushing past Mitaka, Rey’s initial curiosity transformed into unprecedented disbelief.

Her eyes fell upon a disheveled Ben at the end of the hall, wrestling with the luggage on the last few steps of stairs. His dark hair mused from travel, and navy blue t-shirt wrinkled, Rey did not know how to compute the fact Ben stood less than a few paces away from her.

Here in Ahch-To, where he swore he’d not visit unless it be for her.
At the sight of Rey, he pathetically dropped both suitcases he lugged and messenger bag hanging awkwardly over his left shoulder. His body seemed to go slack in her presence, as though all his previous worries and woes evaporated the moment he felt her eyes on him.

“Hi.” He breathed.

Twenty-Four Hours Earlier

“Ben, seriously? Did you expect any less from me?”

Phone balanced with adequate skill between his shoulder and the side of his face, Ben grimaced.

“No mother—of course not.” For the briefest moment, he set the phone down on the floor, unable to search for his suitcase while juggling a phone. Digging deeper into his hall closet, he finally found his grey suitcase piled under Amazon boxes he never got around to throwing out. Phone cradled in position once more, Ben continued, “I just thought I’d be leaving sometime next week—like we discussed.”

She asked in disagreement.

“The week ends on Friday—you can travel a red eye. It won’t kill you. Not to mention tickets are less expensive.” His mother said over the phone, a clink of dishes and running water in the background. Ben refrained a sigh; she put him on speaker phone. Again. This developing habit of hero's put Ben on edge. He’d have to be careful with what he said or else someone (his father) would hear and this someone (his father) would make useless, awkward jokes to kill the argument. He didn’t need to think about his father’s less than stellar comedy right then.

“But—I work.” Ben insisted, teeth clenched. For a former workaholic, Leia often forgot her own son needed to work and make something of his life. Especially when he had a nonexistent paycheck at the moment. Vader’s remaining shares were given to him once he’d been sufficiently identified in his will. Therefore, Ben had not been entirely hopeless, yet he did not want to use these funds unless absolutely necessary. He needed to help Knights of Ren on its feet in the mean time.

“Yes, it is so much work running your own business while dissolving another.” His mother spoke sagely, her tone adding fuel to his frustration.

“It is!” Ben huffed as he carried his suitcase to his bedroom. He sighed deeply, feeling weights of tension drop from his shoulders. He held the phone in his free hand. “It is, and I’d appreciate more respect on the matter considering why I am even dissolving a company, or going home in the first place.”

“Fine.” Leia resolved, “Fine—what can I do to make this easier? Hmm? I’m not changing your flight.”

Ben set his phone down on his nightstand, tapping speaker phone option. He needed to pack before his meeting with the Knights of Ren, and he’d have to reschedule with Cassian. Not that it mattered too much since their leads on the Kenobi matter were scarce. Satine apparently new nothing…and effectively blocked his number for mentioning Kenobi.

“I don’t know—I have to accomplish some work while I am there.” Ben answered tiredly, opening his dresser drawers. He picked up a few t-shirts, then grabbed a pair of pajama pants. Carefully he
placed his belongings into his suitcase, not one to pack with little thought.

“Weren’t you going to spend time with Rey?”

“She has a life outside of me, mom.” Ben reminded her, “And she has classes until Tuesday. I’m not going to follow her like some hapless puppy.”

Leia snorted. “Sure.”

His phone buzzed, a message from Mitaka lighting up the screen—

_D. Mitaka_

_Are we still good for 3pm? You were the only one who did not confirm on the time. I already sent the agenda to everyone._

Before Ben typed out a response, an idea formulated in his brain; after all, his mother did ask what would help him work while he was away…

“You know what, I think there is something you can do.”

“When you said you had a surprise trip, I thought it would be free vacation or convention—but being the third wheel to you and your girlfriend is not my definition of a ‘surprise’.” Mitaka grumbled as he struggled to lug his suitcase into Ben’s apartment.

With some bribery and false pretenses, Ben convinced Mitaka to visit Ahch-To with him for business purposes. If anyone were to keep him updated and in-check with everything going on with both Knights of Ren and First Order Literary, it’d be his former assistant.

Ben rolled his eyes, fingers tapping impatiently by his printer. His mother emailed him the tickets, purchasing Mitaka’s as well despite Ben’s assurances the two would pay her back. She denied his stubborn demand, claiming the trip as a ‘family expense’.

Stumbling over his feet, once again, the smaller man did his best to stand tall. A futile gesture as Mitaka’s ginormous suitcase was more than half the size of the mousy man.

Ben cringed at the poor sight.

“You do know we are only going to be there for a week, right? And we’ll have access to washers and dryers while were there.” He eyed the suitcase, “There is no need to take your entire room.”

Mitaka did not comment, instead flopping down on Ben’s sofa. “Please no PDA while I’m there—that’s all I ask.” He raised his hand up in scouts honor, regarding the taller man seriously.

Ben smirked, “No PDA; we’re not really into that.” He shrugged, picking up the newly printed paper. Leafing through the small pile, he handed his former assistant his ticket. “Here you go.”

Mitaka took the offered paper with a questioning squint, “How do you know you are not into public displays of affection when you two didn’t even become official until she was back home?”

The young man had a point.

Yes, he and Rey seemed to be affectionate towards one another during their time together. Ben was
sure he did not hallucinate the entire encounter.

They’d hold each other contently and gently pepper air light kisses, yet nothing increasingly intimate than their one attempt.

However, while out and about the city, along with attending dinner at Amilyn’s, they weren’t physically affectionate. An occasional lean into the other’s embrace or holding hands, but nothing more…yet this was before their new ‘status.’ Which did not feel as though much changed in the cross from friendship to romantic relationship. Was there supposed to be a change, a revelation of sorts?

Furthermore, Rey didn’t seem to be a physically affectionate person; she awkwardly hugged both Poe and Amilyn when they met, and hesitated with handshakes. Maybe she was selective—better yet, guarded. He understood her reasons well, he far too similar in his own actions.

“You know what Mitaka,” Ben stated bluntly, Mitaka not flinching once under his stern gaze, “Shut up.”

Tilting his head to the side, feigning thought, the smaller man shook his head. “Nah. You’re no longer my boss, and I might even go as far to say Knights of Ren is a joint venture—you don’t really have the ‘imposing scary dude’ aura anymore.”

Bizarrely enough, there was truth in Mitaka’s statement. Ben may have stood up to Snoke and been a brooding mess throughout his time at First Order Literary, but the second his title dissolved most of his former co-workers and colleagues noticed Ben was none of these ideas. In fact, Phasma with her gossiping streak somehow let loose the shut down was to save his girlfriend’s piece, his image shifting from Dark-Stern Editor to Soft Caring Boyfriend.

Unquestionably, Ben wanted to gag at the coos of endearment for his efforts.

“All I’m saying is I don’t want to hear you guys.” Mitaka clarified, raising his eyebrows suggestively.

Feeling the implications of the statement, Ben crossed his arms over his chest and held his head high. Mostly in hope he did not combust on the inside.

He and Rey…they hadn’t done that. Nor did he desire to urge sex if she did not want to engage. To hear someone else comment on their sex lives, while a light innuendo, caused his hackles to rise. Their relationship had been under scrutiny and remarks of their own friends. However good natured Rey claimed them to be, Ben grew increasingly uncomfortable with everyone’s sudden interest and input.

Gritting his teeth, Ben took a deep breath. Mitaka was there to help with work while he was away, and be another man in his corner. With all the Skywalkers and Solo’s in one area, he’d need all the moral support he could garner. Glancing at his watch, Ben grabbed his jacket off the back of the armchair. “W—whatever, just don’t fall behind while you’re lugging that behemoth around.”

Present

“I didn’t think you’d come this early—I thought you said something about Monday or even Tuesday—”
“My mother.” Ben offered as explanation.

Rey nodded once, eyes widening a fraction. “Understood.”

“Flight then train ride here was long—I forgot how remote it is here.” Ben grumbled with an edging smile. Peering up at him, Rey gentle bushed away loose hair from his face. Though she seemed exhausted with her bedhead frizzy and out of place, she appeared radiant before his eyes.

From behind Rey, Mitaka coughed.

Quickly, she pulled her hand away and her cheekbones warming. Rey lifted her gaze back to Ben, whose eyes never fell from her form.

“Honestly, you didn’t need to come here first.” She said, turning away to help with their luggage. Rey lifted Mitaka’s case upright with ease, snapping the handle in place. With one swooped move, the suitcase was rolling along beside her into the apartment. “You could have gone to a hotel—”

“In Ahch-To? Yeah, right.” Ben chuckled, “Last I checked there was a Motel 6 and everything else was rental houses.”

Listening to their conversation, Mitaka halted once the door was shut. His eyes bugled wide. “Seriously?” Ben and Rey stopped, looking back at him with matching faces of concern. “Where are we sleeping? Where are we staying? Please tell me you thought this through.”

Past horrors danced across Mitaka’s eyes, as though this had not been the first time Ben had dragged him along somewhere without making thorough plans. Rey would not have been surprised; despite presenting himself as a creature of introspection, Ben’s actions were rather reckless. He’d been very lucky on several occasions to not cause lasting problems, yet there were lingering scars of his impulsive reactions. Such as his relationship with his family.

Clearly, Ben did not think out everything for this excursion.

“I…” Ben glanced between the two, Rey raising an eyebrow in amusement while Mitaka deeply sulked. Biting his lips together, Ben shrugged. “I just kind of assumed I’d stay with Rey, because she stayed with me—”

“Well, what about me?” Mitaka stressed, flailing his arms frantically. “Me, who is also here!”

Silence befell the three. Rey, fighting remaining grogginess from waking up, observed the two men before her with mild mirth. While Ben should not have made the assumption he’d be staying with Rey, she was rather pleased he did. Over the few days she spent with him, Rey became fond of waking up beside him and simply feeling his presence in the same room. Sleeping by herself in her own bed suddenly felt foreign when she came back from Brooklyn. For someone who knew independence to the fault, she found this new sense of longing to stir oddly within her being. She did not fear it, instead curious of what this longing could mean.

Meanwhile…Poor Mitaka seemed to be roped into this situation unwillingly.

“The trundle bed!” She declared, automatically wincing at her own exclamation.

“What?” Mitaka asked, shouldering his backpack higher.

“My roommate Finn has trundle bed—it’s one of those beds that’s tucked under and pulls out.” Rey’s botched explanation seemed sufficient enough, her other guest’s creased forehead smoothing out.
“Okay…and would your roommate be okay with this?” Mitaka spoke slowly, eyeing Rey carefully.

“Finn? Definitely!” She chirped to Mitaka, before turning to Ben with a strained smile and panic in her eyes.

Yeah, Finn would not be okay with this.

“What the hell, Rey?” Finn hissed when Rey explained their current living situation.

When she heard his car pull up into the parking lot, Rey rushed to intercept him—still dressed in her checkered pajama bottoms and beige sweater. With helping her unexpected guests settle into the apartment (and tossing all her dirty clothes laying around her room into her closet before Ben noticed), she did not find the time to put on a bra, let alone shower and change her clothes.

“Please, I didn’t know he was bring his assistant either!” She begged, clasping her hands together under her chin.

Pouting dramatically, Rey batted her bright eyes at him.

Finn remained stern, not collapsing into the vortex of her pleading eyes. Realizing her tactic was not working, Rey violently dropped her hands down to her side.

“Peanut…” Finn groaned, trying his best to be mad at her but found it difficult when she looked so…out of it. “I get it, you want to shabang your dude—”

“That’s not why he’s here.”

“—and you need me to watch over the third wheel.” Finn shrugged in casual understanding.

“Mitaka can honestly care less about Ben and I.” Rey rolled her eyes. A harsh breeze swept through the parking lot, Rey shivering as her loose clothing rippled. Crossing her arms over her chest, she narrowed her gaze on Finn. “I get it—I am pulling a bitch move, but you have to help me out! I gave you and Rose and entire week in out apartmen—”

“That’s different.” Finn interjected. His face pinched, as though smelling something foul. “Who names their kid ‘Mitaka’?”

Rey shut her lips together; she might as well tell him. Not that it was hers to tell, or even Ben’s, but she had been curious after she met his assistant.

Deciding to tell Finn, Rey schooled her expressed; she would not laugh. Not like last time.

“His first name is Dopheld.”

His eyebrows flew high as he whistled lowly. “I now understand why he goes by Mitaka,” Finn said full of pity for the guy.

Flopping her hands in the air, Rey addressed her roommate head on, “Tell me; what do I need to do to let you house Mitaka for the week?”

A sneaky grin bloomed on his face, Rey feeling her dread rise the giddier Finn became.

“Rose and I get to hang out with Ben for one whole afternoon—without you.”
“What? Why?” Rey blurted out, stunned by the simple, yet horrifying request. Not to mention the preparedness of his answer, the words sure and confident as they left his lips.

“We want to get to know him, and know him well.” He said calmly, Rey slightly unnerved by this calm, casual, decisive Finn. The little fucker probably had been planning this for days—probably when she told him Ben was planning on visiting. Needing his help merely turned out to work for Finn’s efforts. “Especially who he is without you around.”

Rey held her head high, titling her chin down as she regarded him skeptically. “What does that mean?”

“People are different when they’re smitten.” Finn pointedly reminded her with a knowing gleam in his eyes. A jab undoubtedly referring to her. She may get a little lovesick at times, or become dazed, but that didn’t mean she necessarily changed.

Rey knew she’d regret this, but… “Okay,” She nodded once, trying to reassure herself that ‘yes, this was the right decision’. “You and Rose can spend an afternoon with Ben,” Finn whooped, “But, I get to choose the afternoon and where you go. I’m not letting you drive him to some far off campsite in the hills. I’d like to still have a boyfriend by the end of this week.”

“I’ll take it!” Finn complied, bypassing Rey up the stairs of the apartment complex. “Let’s go meet Rey’s Boy-Toy.”

“DON’T CALL HIM THAT!”

“You can go ahead and unpack, if you’re hungry there might be some food in the fridge…” Rey trailed off, not entirely sure if there was food in the fridge. She stopped by a sandwich shop on her way home from work the previous afternoon—she honestly didn’t know if there was anything edible in her kitchen.

So much for being a welcoming host.

“Rey, its fine,” Ben reassured her, rubbing a hand up and down her left arm soothingly, the motion leaving a little tingle. “I’m fine—go to work.” He pressed lightly. Though amusing to see the usually assured Rey frazzled over him of all people, Ben knew he need to get her back on her routine. She had a plan for the day and he may have unceremoniously crashed it.

After running giving a tour and listing all the possible number’s they would possibly need (the numbers to the local pizza parlor on the top of said list), Rey finally got around to getting dressed for work, introductions made between the men. Surprisingly, Finn had kept his cool around Ben, but that did not stop him from mouthing obscenities behind his back to Rey. Finn went off to show Mitaka around, the two getting along swimmingly….to the point both Ben and Rey found their immediate, easy comradery disturbing.

Honestly, she felt guilty about leaving Ben to his own devices for a few hours.

“Are you sure?” Rey asked, “I mean I can call in sick or—or you can come with me!” The implication of her words hit her, realizing not bringing up Ben’s family would be harder than not crying while watching Disney movies—extremely difficult. “Why the fuck did I say that? I mean —”

Ben breathed a chuckle, “Like I said, I’ll be fine. Go to work, we can spend time together later.”
Rey remained hesitant, her hazel eyes piercing into him. He smiled softly down at her, his heart twisting in a flutter as her eyes eased into a tender hold. “I’m here for an entire week.” He reminded her, leaning his forehead against Rey’s. Staring down at her, he slowly repeated, “An entire week.”

Closing her eyes she nodded against him, “Okay,” Rey leaned back from Ben, shooting him finger guns in the little space between their chests. “I would kiss you, but if I did I’d never make it to work.”

“Go.” He insisted, stepping further away from her. He ignored her grabby hands, playfully batting her arms away. Wincing pitifully at the loss of his embrace, Rey sagged glumly.

Turning on her heel, she marched out of the room with a back hand wave. As though seeing him as she left would cause her to spin back around and leap into his arms—he’d never let her go if she did.

Further in the apartment, he heard her call out a general ‘bye’ to the rest of the abode before the door slammed shut.

Waiting a moment in the silence, Ben inhaled and then exhaled. Opening his eyes slowly, he decided to unpack.

Lifting his suitcase on top of the bed, Ben’s eyes trailed the room, his task momentarily forgotten. In Rey’s haste to get ready and the mix of introductions, he did not fully intake Rey’s room.

Years ago, when he’d been Luke’s student, Ben recalled the importance of a bedroom. Specifically, the importance of knowing a character’s bedroom—the place where they became their true selves in the safety of their four walls. For some reason this remark stood with Ben through the years…he briefly wondered if Rey ever had to do the writing exercise, before making a mental note for her to try.

Similar to her earthy toned wardrobe, Rey’s room was several shades of cool grays and rich browns—from the walls, to the sheets and down cover on her bed, to the desk lamp. For such a passionate and spirited person, Rey’s room reflected a somber mood…as though part of the room were trapped in a forgotten time. Not past, nor present, but a standstill.

Cluttered, yet meticulous—every piece of furniture strategically placed to achieve maximum space in the room, though the lingering clothes around the room and paper covered desk contradicted the order. Midterm to end of semester stretch brought chaos, Rey not immune to its virus. Marked papers consumed the furthest point of her desk, far away from her bed while her laptop sat closest. An image of Rey sitting up from bed and blindly reaching for her laptop, came to mind. Fading blue stream of light danced across the screen, her laptop charging will the screensaver performed its coded pattern. Books piled the center of the desk, regular yellowish-beige sticky-notes poking through the pages. A classic students work space…yet the scrawl of her handwriting and the well managed succulent possessed qualities of Rey’s compassionate presence.

The far off right corner of the room seemed to be the only area in the entire room with a pop of color. A collage of movie posters filled the furthest wall, closest to her bed. Sci-fi, fantasy and comic book titles were the genre majority on the wall (he quickly spotted the New Moon poster)…except for one. In the upper right corner was a band poster, The Smiths, with the lyrics of ‘Panic’ printed on the once glossy, yet now dull paper.

He never pegged her a Smiths girl; the poster, once known to the eye, stuck out like a sore thumb amongst the business of the sci-fi and fantasy.
Books lined the crammed bookshelf, squished and shoved until they filled every available space. Picking up the nearest book—*Jane Eyre*—he found the page annotated with her loopy yet messy scrawl. She wrote with pen, claiming the pages as her own alongside the authors; she simply as important to the journey.

Setting the book back down, Ben considered the wall once more. Maybe...maybe this was Rey’s version of a vision board—or maybe she really enjoyed fantasy and sci-fi movies.

He was analyzing too much into it. Hampering down his curiosity, Rey’s room appeared to be simple, exceptionally her in the sense of minimalism yet—there was something particularly off. Ben did not know what.

Carefully, he set his clothes in the drawer Rey freed for him. Unpacking, he forced himself to not become too comfortable with the domesticity of the action. No matter how he longed, he needed to remind himself the distance was temporary, not a life sentence. One day, hopefully, he’d be able to put his clothes amongst her own belongings permanently—the room theirs, rather than one or the other’s.

---

**August 12th 1983**

*My heart goes out to Kenobi. His daughter has run off again. He and Satine try, they honestly do. Both their letters were filled with woe for Winter. Though as an orphan myself, I sympathize with her. At times, it is difficult to transition, to try living with a warm welcoming family while struggling to comprehend the loss of your own.*

*I feel Winter struggles to accept me because I have known Ben for years; we practically grew up as brothers. Despite going months without communication, Kenobi’s family is my family and vice versa. This has always been fact, yet Winter does not seem to like this. Childish though it may be, a fourteen year old should not be trying to run off on her own. She does not seem to understand the gravity of love Ben and Satine have for her—she may not be their flesh and blood, but they love her all the same.*

*Once one finds unconditional love, one must never let it go. Never.*

*Or you’d live with decades of guilt. I know I do.*

---

“I’m sorry I’m late!” Rey called out into the relatively empty shop. She halted mid-sprint, stunned to see Han was nowhere to be found in the main area of the building.

At his work station cleaning his tools of grease, Chewie waved in greeting. He then pointed to the break room, the door ajar. Nodding in thanks, Rey went over to the room only to find it empty as well expect for a tray of meatball subs on the kitchenette counter.

Ahh, Chewie wanted be sure she was fed, like a dormant mother hen—appearing when she least expected it, but enough to know his good natured intentions. Picking up a sandwich, Rey ambled out of the room back to Chewie.

“Where’s Han?” She generously bit into the meatball sub, not entirely caring if she spilled sauce over her clothes.
Chewie shrugged with a noncommittal grunt, “Sad…about…Ben.” He mumbled slowly, the mention of Ben paining him as well.

“Does, does he know Ben is coming today?” She asked hesitantly, not wanting to seem as though she was prying, even though that was exactly what she’d been doing.

He nodded in confirmation, his eyes watering under his bushy eyebrows. A pang of hurt flickered in Rey’s chest, reminded her hairy, ginormous, lovable sued uncle had been hurt when the Solo’s all broke apart. A fleeting thought passed—Chewie must have watched Ben grow up, if he and Han had been friends for as long as they claimed they were. A tiny, big eared Ben must have been cradled in his arms and tickled and kissed. Giggles she never heard echoed in her mind, her imagination supplying flashed of memories of what may have been… a quick flinch of anger piqued in Rey.

How could Ben leave them? Leia, Han, Chewie—they appeared to be exceptionally caring and loving and—

She knew why, and dampened unnecessary indignation quickly. Ben…had his own reasons. She knew this, yet…

“Well,” Rey rested a hand on Chewie’s shoulder. For the time Rey knew Ben, he never once spoke ill of Chewie. Grudges against the friendly giant were nonexistent. “He’s already in town and I’m sure Ben will be delighted to see you. Maybe we can meet at The Castle sometime this week.”

“Not here,” He rumbled deeply, almost indecipherable. No not there in the autoshop; Ben was horrorstricken when she mentioned the thought of coming to the autoshop. To force him to meet anyone at the autoshop would be begging for trouble.

Neutral locations were—hopefully—the best.

“Yeah, I don’t think here would be the best option, buddy.” She smiled at Chewie, patting his shoulder once.

He sighed somberly. Flicking one of the buns lining the back of her head, Chewie smiled under his beard again. Getting back to work, he whistled a melody-less tune as he shined his wrenches.

Rey would drag Ben by his ears if he so much as fussed about visiting Chewie. They were going to see each other—only to hug or say hello—the two men were going to meet for a few minutes if it were the last things she’d do.

December 19th 1983

This will be the first Christmas with the children knowing—well knowing of their heritage…

Ben stopped reading. How—the journal jumped from August to December. Flicking through the pages, his fingers felt along the inner spine of the bound notebook. A sliver of space remain empty, not noticeable at the average glance. An entire section of paper had been removed, expertly. The pages flowed easily, the spine not whining against the turns or jarring open at the empty space.

Ben’s stomach dropped. Four months of Vader’s life was gone. In these four months, his mother and uncle apparently discovered their biological father…and Anakin had nothing. Or he did have words on the matter, though the missing pages made his desire for privacy…or seeking to forget,
evident. Why would his grandfather remove the pages? Journals were meant to vent, to express emotions in their height. To understand one’s self better…

Swallowing, Ben realized he violated the purpose of Anakin’s journals. His loyalty to his former mentor screamed at him to put the journals away; put the journals back in the box when he returned to his apartment.

Yet the ghost of Kenobi remained ever alive.

Kenobi’s daughter appeared to be another link to the man without trace. She’d been mentioned sporadically in the journals; her runaway attempts the most common trait noted. The girl, Winter, had been adopted by Benjamin Kenobi and Satine Kyrze when she was eleven. Kenobi and Satine wanted children, but found themselves unable to conceive in their older age. Adopting Winter caused brief happiness for them, until she began to act up and insist to be taken to her true family. Sadly, the girl was abandoned at a young age, believing her parents to return for her one day. Her hope never dissolved, to the point she’d run away to try and find her biological mother and father.

A Winter Kenobi, nor Winter Kyrze existed. Not a single person possessed those names, absent from all online presence.

His mind drifted back to the missing months—did Winter return? How did his uncle and mother discover Anakin? Somehow over the course of four months, his family knew of Anakin. How he’d been close yet never close enough to reach, for nearly all their lives.

However, by December they knew—three years before he’d been born.

Biting his lips together, Ben shut the journal soundlessly. Tightly he coiled the leather strap around the faded blue cover. Gently, he shoved it under a pillow with its twin. He didn’t realize the two identical journals were written at different times when he packed his suitcase. The twin spanned from January 1996 to September 1996; he wasn’t entirely happy to be reading the journals out of order, but he had no other choice in the matter this instance.

Picking up his own inconspicuous black journal and stealing a pen from Rey’s ridiculous array, Ben decided to write. He’d tried to write at least once every few days for leisure, his desire to write an actual piece diminishing the longer he was an editor.

Amilyn had the audacity to suggest he pick it up again when he visited her for their latest session. Time became an illusion as he wrote away—about his travels (Mitaka asked for one to many sparkling bottles of water on the flight and proceeded to burp for the remaining half hour), his frustrations with Kenobi, and about seeing Rey once again. The memories and event blurred together on the page, his cursive becoming sharper as he wrote across several pages. He’d forgotten the exhilaration writing freely gave him, with asking little in return. Simply an unstated plea to write more.

“Hey,” Rey’s voice floated from outside the room, “Hello, anybody home—oh there you are”, She announced happily by the doorway. He heard her stroll closer, Ben lifting his gaze from his journal once he saw her sock clad feet from his peripherals. His glasses slipped down the tip of his nose, not realizing he’d been hunched over as he wrote. She chuckled a bit at his dazed, blinking eyes. “I’ve never seen you so focused.” She dropped her backpack on her desk chair, peering down at him curiously. “What are you writing?”

“All,” He opened his mouth to answer, but did not have the words. “Anything, everything.” He remarked, eyes following her as she plopped herself across from him on the bed.
Less than a foot separated the two, their knees nudging against each other as Rey wiggled in her spot to find a comfortable position. With a half-hearted huff, she settled on sitting with her legs folded criss-cross. Her drooping eyes and faint slump of her shoulders were telling of her state, though she was not covered in grease. Casual clothes—a sweater and jeans—replaced the jumpsuit she wore.

She leaned closer to him, her eyes roving over the journal and pen, then lifting back to his face. “I’ve never seen you write before, you look…I don’t know—”

“Don’t say pretentious—”

“Thoughtful.” She interjected sternly. “Lost in thought,” Rey elaborated, though Ben didn’t quite believe her. He knew he’d make strange pensive faces when he wrote, or focused intently on anything in particular. “It’s admirable.” She declared, hands twiddling with her throw blanket.

Watching him, she chewed lightly on her upper lip, Ben meeting her gaze with a nudging smile. Her eyes darted down when she became uncomfortable with the unabashed staring, a growing habit they’d both found themselves guilty of since he arrived. A moment later, their gazes connected again, Ben feeling a surge of confidence in her genuine eyes.

Leaning forward, he gently pressed his lips upon hers. He felt the flutter of her eyes closing against his cheeks, his own shutting the moment they made the briefest air of contact. A shuddered breath escaped Rey, her hands reaching to touch him, hold him anywhere. Feeling her move closer, and her tentative hands resting near his collarbone, Ben deepened the kiss. Journal and pen laid to the side forgotten as his larger hands blindly found her waist, pulling her closer to him. He needing to feel all of her—feel her there with him, finally kissing her senselessly like he’d been thinking of doing when he laid his eyes on her morning. A tiny whine sounded from the back of Rey’s throat, her legs scrambling to anchor on either sides of his thighs. Aiding her, Ben shifted closer, his hands dropping to her hips, guiding her upon his lap. Ragged breaths escaped him as his lips left the sweet serenity of hers, peppering kisses across her cheekbone down her blushing neck. His mind buzzed as he felt the warmth of her skin grade his own heated touch.

He found himself stopping as his nose brushed the juncture of her neck and shoulder. Nuzzling into her, Ben’s hold on her hips loosened and rose to tender encircle her. Slowly, their chests moved in sync as they found their breath together, a wave of peace washing over them. Lilith fingers carded through his hair, her short nails occasionally scratching across his scalp. Gradually her body relaxed against his, the side of face resting against the crown of his head.

Puffs of air brushed his hair, Rey’s arms dropping lazily around his shoulders. Tilting her head down, her lips lingered by his left ear, a delicate kiss pressed on to the exposed skin.

“Hi,” She said lowly, her brilliant hazel eyes glowing back at him.

“Hi,” He grinned boyishly, unable to bite down his unbridled joy.

Noticing his glasses skewed, Rey adjusted the frames a half giggle bubbling in her. “There.” She murmured. She fell back into his embrace, her chin weighing on his shoulder. Subtle breaths tickled his neck by where she laid quietly, while his hand drew mindless circles into the small of her back.

Neither moved, content in the solace of each other’s arms.

Chapter End Notes
That kiss is the level of sexual content you will be getting in this fic. Nothing more than that; smut just doesn't work with the tone of the fic.

And of course it was Ben at the door! Technically Mitaka, but come on you guys! Who else would show up unannounced? Jk, I totally know I trolled you all with the cliffie and my comments :)

Kenobi's adopted daughter Winter! Which funfact, the name 'Winter' comes from the character 'Winter' who was Leia's spy assistant in the Expanded Universe--which I continue taking names from there because they are all very SW sounding and I know I'd be super lame if I came up with something to fit the realm, lol.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers :)

Love you, bye!
The Force Will Be With You. Always.

Chapter Summary

Ben goes on a walk.
Later, there is a date.

Chapter Notes

Typos will be fixed throughout the week, and if I have not responded to your comment yet, I will within the next 24hrs :D

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A heavy weight on Ben’s chest stirred him from sleep.

Blinking groggily, he found the room to be relatively dark. Overcast sunrise peeked through the windows. Turning his chin down to the side, he found a blurry form of Rey partially curled on half of his body. Her head rested on his chest, Ben feeling dampness on his t-shirt from her drool.

Doing his best not to wake her, he reached a hand over to the desk, his fingers finding his glasses. Once put on, his vision became clearer. On top of him, Rey murmured incoherently at the movement before ultimately snuggling closer, her left leg thrown over his.

The previous night proved to be nice and quiet, neither truly leaving the room unless for the bathroom, or when Rey ran to answer the door for the pizza delivery man. They mostly talked….then kissed some more…then talked…then ate….then talked until Rey dozed off midsentence about the importance of starting up a beach clean-up team for Ahch-To. Once her head lulled to the side, Ben draped a light grey throw blanket over her. He fell asleep soon after, shutting off the bedside lamp and functional fairy lights.

On the desk, Rey’s laptop remained open on night mode with the time dimly lit.

4:16AM

Damn time difference.

Gently prying Rey’s arms from his middle, Ben gradually slipped out of bed. On his exit, he made sure to catch her head on a pillow. She curled around the soft cushion tightly, fingers stretching then fisting, reminding him of a cat kneading. An immediate loss of warmth hit Ben’s skin as he crouched on the floor, too afraid he’d wake her if he fully stood up and jostled the bed. Leaning back up, he pressed a feather light kiss on her temple. He paused as he felt her relax once again, his nose brushing her chestnut hair aside. Refraining from nuzzling against her, he stood up and quietly
left the room.

Closing the door softly, he shuffled down the hall.

From the left, Finn’s bedroom door was ajar. Ben peaked his head in, unable to help his piqued curiosity.

The two young men’s natural comradery was both amusing and frightening, Ben never knowing Mitaka to be so…melodramatic and talkative.

Disturbingly, the room was empty.

Picking up his pace, Ben entered the living room-kitchen area to find an oddly endearing sight.

On the television, the Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring menu music looping quietly. On the couch, the two men were dressed in matching dinosaur pajamas with bowls of popcorn and candy littering the cushions between them.

An old fashion slumber party.

While tempted to photograph for future blackmail, Ben decided to give Mitaka this one. After all, he did drag him across the country to essentially visit Rey.

Trying his best to be discreet, he scrounged the kitchen cabinets for coffee. At this point falling back asleep did not seem to be a viable option. Once finding the coffee grounds, he went to brew a pot, trying his best to think of what to do with this…free time.

The last few weeks had been hectic, Rey’s texts and phone calls becoming the highlight of his days. However, now that he was far from most of his work related troubles, which somehow became his life related troubles, Ben found himself stumped. He didn’t have many hobbies back in Brooklyn, playing around with his calligraphy set when he had the time, but otherwise work and reading were his main consumption. Unfortunately, Ben left his calligraphy supplies back in his apartment.

Sounds of coffee dripping and hazy-foggy skies stirred nostalgia within Ben. Early mornings in Ahch-To felt otherworldly, stepping into another dimension. He’d take long walks around town thinking, stopping and writing wherever he felt the need.

A walk would do him good…

Finding a to-go thermos, Ben poured some coffee, cream, and sugar into the mug before setting off to change his clothes. Dressing in a sweater and casual jeans, he tied his shoes on. Picking up one of the lingering notepad’s strew across Rey’s desk, he wrote a quick note—

Woke up too early. Went on a walk; will be back soon.

~Ben

With nothing left to do, Ben slipped out the door, coffee in one hand and his journal in the other.

Han Solo once lived for spontaneity.

Going off with the guys to race cars or fly for a day. Random camping trips in the foothills. Cross
country road trips. Living on a boat for weeks. Building patios, gazebos, houses—whatever— for anyone who merely asked.

He liked to keep busy. Work with his hands, find something to tinker with for a few hours. Get dirty, greasy, messy, but feel the utter satisfaction of completing work with his own fortitude.

Of course, this was him about fifteen years ago.

Now, he lives a pretty routine life.

Wakes up at five, makes his breakfast and coffee for himself—or Leia if she happened to be around. Gets ready for the day, takes a walk around town, says ‘hello’ to the locals. Small talk with other shop owners. Stops at The Castle, tries to convince Maz to just give him a free muffin, but pays her double anyways. His feet lead him to his own place of work, an autoshop he owned for over two decades.

He’d smile and wave at Kaydel in her tucked away office, far away from the grime. She’s punching numbers and keeping permits update; all the fuddy business stuff he does not have the patience to do.

He stops by the break room, drops off an apple or two, knowing Rey will stop in and grab one because she forgot to grab breakfast or lunch on her haste to get there for her shift. He’d once again make coffee, but this time for the entire shop crew, never knowing who’d moan they ran out at home or simply needed an extra pick me up.

Then he’d work from nine to five, or whenever Rey decided to leave. Sometimes the kid would get off her shift, sit in the breakroom and write away. Time would pass and she wouldn’t notice, engrossed in her own words. She reminded him too much of his son when she brooded at a table, chewing on her pen pensively.

It should have been no surprise the boy she’d been pinning over for weeks was said son. Though with the distance and impracticality of it all, Han was completely floored by the revelation.

Ben and Rey seemed odd when thought separately. Rey...well Rey was everything Han wanted in a child. Quick witted, kind-yet-stern, independent, loved cars...the list could go on. Not to mention she did not mind his help—she sigh and try to act as though she didn’t, but the girl for once seemed to act her age. She’d never been truly cared for, and she allowed him and Chewie to help her every so often. Pick her up lunch, give her a ride somewhere, check in on her when she was sick...she was content to be occasionally parented.

Ben on the other hand...received too many Solo and Skywalker traits, to the point Han once believed he and Leia ruined their son. Stubborn and sensitive, impulsive yet thoughtful, smart—smarter than he and Leia ever were, but incredibly naïve. Ben screamed when he didn’t want attention, yet folded into himself when he desperately needed his parents.

Han tried the ‘hands off’ technique, which proved to backfire. Then Leia tried to encourage quality time between the two—which also backfired, and led to an unfortunate accident.

Luke then had to cause some waves and Ben packed up and left without a word.

Not a single call. Text message. Email. Not even a letter.

His son was fed up with their family and ran away.

Han wanted to be angry about the situation—being angry was easier than feeling the pit-falling
hollowness of disappointment. Not for his son, but of himself. He noticed the signs, Han himself a serial runaway in his youth, yet did nothing to stop Ben. If his son wanted to be left alone, no matter how much it broke Han’s heart, he’d let him.

He’d do anything to know his son was happy. Anything, to see him crack his half smile again.

Which was the predicament Han found himself—sitting a couple yards away, at their old favorite bench, was Ben.

A fully grown, adult version of his gangly boy. A boy with soft eyes, big ears, and moppy hair. All qualities Ben possessed into his early thirties.

Their old spot over looked the bay, little sea lions popping in and out to catch sardines by the shore. Every Sunday they’d wake early in the morning, doing their best not to wake Leia, and snuck out to the bay with their hot chocolate, snacks, and binoculars to watch for the wildlife. As a boy, his son loved the sea lions, sitting giddily on Han’s lap, hoping to catch a peek of their head ebbing in the waves. Standing on the bench, little Ben would mimic their calls, hoping to hear them bark happily back.

Emotion caught in Han’s throat as he watched Ben sit with his journal closed beside him. His son’s neck stretched out, trying to look out into the bay...for sea lions.

Swallowing his threatening tears and long ridden pride, Han walked over to the bench.

As he came closer, Han realized his son grew and changed in their time apart. His clothes were no longer old band t-shirts or gungy plaids, but dark, well fitted casual clothes. Normal black sweater, dark green jacket, and jeans. The only sign Ben may have been the emotionally distraught punk boy he tried his best to displays was his shoes—old Converse that must have been a decade old, with illegible words written on the white rubber. He remember nearly knocking Ben upside the head when he vandalized his own shoes, wondering why the hell would his son buy new shoes to only write on them.

It was wonder how those damn canvas shoes survived.

His hair was still long enough to cover his ears. Old insecurities tough to kill. When Ben left home, he’d been trying his best to grow facial hair, sporting a mustache and scruff on his chin. Not an inch of facial hair lingered his face, only a bit of a shadow noticeable on his pale skin. Glasses were a somewhat new addition—Ben’s vision went haywire as a teen along with the acne, he and Leia taking pity on the kid and opting for contact lens instead.

For once, his son appeared to be comfortable in his own skin. A sight Han never thought he’d live to see.

Stopping a foot or two away from the bench, Han removed the binoculars hanging around his neck.

He sat down in the empty space, setting is thermos of coffee next to him.

“They,” Han cleared his throat, “they usually come out a little later these days. You’ve got about another, maybe twenty minutes before a little guy starts swimming by.”

“Oh,” Ben muttered.

Silence befell them, Han feeling his son blatantly looking at him while he tried to focus on the swish-swash of water slapping the bay.
Both simultaneously reached for their to-go mugs, drinking coffee to ignore the idle atmosphere.

“Do…” Ben began, needlessly holding his mug with both large hands, “do the, uh,” he coughed a bit, setting his coffee back down, “the sea lions come out often…on Sundays?”


“I see,” Ben breathed, clasping his hands together on his lap. “I miss them,” he quietly admitted.

“I…well, I miss them too.” Han paused for a moment, peaking at his son from the corner of his eye. “…the sea lions, I mean. If I were to never see them for years, I’d miss them too.”

“Yup.” Ben nodded once.

Neither spoke again for the duration of the morning. Together, the father and son sat in the cool air, drinking coffee and watched the sea lions.

The front door swung open widely, banging against the wall from the force. On the couch, Finn and Mitaka jumped at the sound, effectively woken from their slumber.

“Where is he? I want to see this enigma for my own eyes!”

Rose’s screeching cry spooked Rey, she nearly dropping her Slytherin mug.

“What the fuck Rose!” Rey growled, not completely coherent without her first cup of the day finished.

Her friend winced, a mutter apology followed not long after. Once closing the front door, Rose sat down on the stool by the kitchen counter.

“I’m talking about Ben,” Rose explained, an excited grin playing on her lips. “I tried to come yesterday, but Finn thought you two needed the afternoon together.” Rey’s roommate beamed from the couch when his girlfriend mentioned him, winking at Rey for good measure. God, she was going to owe him big time after all this, wasn’t she? “So I listened—I gave you a day, it is now the next morning and I need to see if Ben is as massive as a tree like Finn claims him to be.”

Rey’s lips pinched together, turning back to her earlier task.

“He went on a walk.”

When Rey woke up around six in the morning, she’d been fully prepared feel a certain body pressed up against her own, stay in bed with him all day, and do absolutely nothing. Sundays were bum days; she didn’t have work, she didn’t have classes, half of town was shut down on Sunday’s during the off season…Sunday was the only day they’d be able to fully spend together during his visit.

Unfortunately, the opposite occurred; Ben had left, his note crinkled under her body.

“Well that sucks,” Rose mumbled. “I thought you two would have finally—”

“Don’t finished that thought. We agreed, sex life is not a topic of discussion unless it is just us,” Rey swiftly reminded Rose, watching her friend deflate at her words.
“Fine.” She folded, slumping in her seat. “I’ll shelve the topic for another day.”

“Thank you,” Rey smiled brightly, Rose’s frowned deepening at Rey’s mocking nature. “Anyways, he should be back soon. I sent him a text to bring food.”

“Wow, already being demanding to your man!” Finn crowed as he stretched his arms up, his neck cracking a bit. While a movie night sounded fun, Rey noticed the guys were soon regretting their plans by the stiffness of their shoulders and quiet groans of pain.

“No, it just doesn’t make sense to go and get something to eat when he is already out and about.” Rey defended, aggressively dumping a mounds of sugar into her mug. She sipped her coffee grumpily. Her tongue curled as she refrained from flinching at the taste, over sweetening the drink when she attempted to distract herself. “He said he’d pick something up from Maz’s.”

Finn cheered loudly, Mitaka yelping. Glancing, at their guest apologetically, Finn nudged Mitaka up, the two helping each other gather pillows and blankets, and take their belongings back to the bedroom.

Shuffles and grumbles were heard down the hall, before becoming silent once more. No doubt the two fell promptly back to sleep once beds were in sight.

“So…” Rose turned back to Rey, “He like, grew up here, right?”

“Yes,” Rey confirmed, sipping more of her coffee with gratuitous effort. “Why?”

Rose fiddled with her necklace, shrugging a little. “Well…it’s like everyone you know, he knows —” She stood up and made her way to the other side of the counter, grabbing the empty kettle off the stove. Rey’s eyes followed Rose curiously as her guest moved about the apartment as though it were her own home. “It’s….kind of weird when you think about it.”

“Weird good— weird bad?” Rey asked, not quite sure on the point Rose was attempting to make.

Her friend filled the kettle with water and placed it on the stove, twisting the knob for the flame. Picking up the container of tea packets, Rose began to sift for her selection.

Rey set her mug down loudly on the counter, catching Rose’s attention once more.

“Weird—”

Just general weird,” Rose stated vaguely, plucking a ginger root flavor for her tea. “Like how you two met is absurd—online, randomly. Then the rest is… serendipity.” She sighed softly, hand resting on her heart. “Quiet iconic, I must say.”

“It’s…happenstance.” Rey considered stiltedly, hoping Rose would drop the subject. “I try not to think too much into it.”

“But—when you think about it, you and Ben are so interconnected, the two of you could have met in any other way, but you didn’t.” She smiled a bit, opening the cupboard for a mug. “It’s like fate, or destiny.”

“Yeah, don’t say those words around, Ben.” Rey warned, recalling Ben’s long rants on the improbability of fate and destiny. For some reason, growing up with a family that loved to dwell on such matters caused him to be affronted by the subject. “He’s not keen on the fate bit.”

“Really?” Rose remarked in disbelief. “You’re telling me a guy whose favorite movie is Roman
Holiday, loves reading magical realism, and has taken the time to get to know you. You who believes in fate with your entire heart—you’re telling me, he doesn’t believe in fate?” Rey shifted uncomfortably under Rose’s intense gaze. “It just sounds to me he is, but too afraid to say—doesn’t want to get his heartbroken.”

Rey pressed her lips together, unsure of how to respond to Rose’s astute observations. Instead she picked up her mug, and moved to the living room with a nod to Rose. The other woman huffed a bit at Rey not addressing or answering the question, letting the matter go.

Understandably, Rey wanted to answer Rose, yet found herself unable to speak for Ben. He was his own person, he can explain himself if he deemed he needed to do so; it was not her responsibility to defend his opinions on the subject of ‘fate’. Something personal…she could not do it in good conscious.

Setting her mug on the coffee table, Rey picked up the remaining bowl of popcorn and chips from Mitaka and Finn’s movie night. As she began cleaning up the bowls, she heard heavy footfalls coming closer to the door. From the stove, Rose perked up, quickly setting her tea supplies aside. Rey chuckled lightly, unable to help but roll her eyes at Rose’s excitement.

Rushing to stand a couple feet away from the door, Rose stood prepared for his entrance. The doorknob turned half a second later, Ben’s massive frame consuming the doorway instantly. A grin bloomed on Rey’s face at the sight him, finding herself smiling more whenever he was within proximity.

A girlish yelp escaped Rose, causing Ben to stumble a bit. Deftly, caught the paper bag he held before it tumble and spilled to the floor.

Ben gapped and bobbed like a fish out of water, crawling the paper bag to his chest. “Uh, hi—I’m sorry—”

“Holy kriff!” Rose shrilled, whipping to Rey ecstatically. “Why didn’t you say he was hotter in person?”

A bark of laughter escaped Rey. Ben’s eyes flew to her, full of sweet softness. Rey’s heart missed a beat whenever he stared at her with the tenderness of a gentle glow. He’d be the death of her if he continued to stop her world with one measly glance.

Clearing his throat, Ben focused his attention back to Rose, becoming awkward as she viewed him unabashedly, her kind eyes burning with delight.

“I’m confused,” Ben squinted back down at Rose, “uh, who are you?”

Rose stuck her hand out for a handshake. Looking back at him, she noticed his hands were full. Without warning, she pried the thermos and paper bag from his hand and set the items on the kitchen counter. Once again, she held out her hand to Ben.

“Rey’s friend and Finn’s girlfriend, Rose Tico—”

“Relation to Paige Tico?” Ben’s voice faltered when Rose’s smile beamed into a full-fledged grin.

“You know my sister? I mean I knew she worked at First Order Literary, but in HR.”

Ben took Rose’s hand, giving a few firm shakes. “Yes, she is wonderful. Has been a great help with all the First Order chaos.” He answered, suddenly professional when speaking about his colleagues. Rey observed the shift in him with intrigue; she’d only seen Ben become ‘professional’
once. When she visited his office and he spoke briefly to a few co-workers, though she never noticed the dominance he exuded confidently when in his role.

“Well, Paige is the best in anything she does.” Rose said proudly, her love for her sister evident whenever the woman was mentioned. “She is an amazing person to have on your side.”

“I could not agree more wholeheartedly.” Ben nodded once, breaking the handshake with Rose. He walked over to Rey, Rose flailing happily yet silently behind his back.

She mouthed ‘He is AMAZING’. Rey snorted into her mug, hoping Ben didn’t catch either of their reactions.

He leaned his side against the kitchen counter, facing Rey. “I brought muffins, a bit of every kind because I wasn’t too sure what everyone liked.”

“Muffins are perfect.” Rey reassured him, leaning up and pressing a quick kiss to his left cheek. Her hand rested on his forearm, rubbing soothingly through the fabric.

A small eruption of ‘aw’s chimed behind them, Rey and Ben peeking over to see Finn, Mitaka and Rose stopping mid-cleaning and cooing at them.

Ben bristled, his arm moving away from Rey’s grasp.

He swallowed tightly, his eyes a little shifty. Clearly, he wanted to talk to her about something, but not while under scrutiny. Rey’s eyes softened, looking down and away from Ben. They’d talk later, she in silent agreement of the crowded atmosphere intruding on a potential conversation.

“I’m going to go ahead and take a shower; it was…uh, a long walk.” Ben informed her, taking a step back before completely leaving the kitchen and living room area.

Rey clenched her jaw, eyes glaring into her unashamed observers. Finn’s glee slightly melted away, while Rose and Mitaka seemed undeterred by her shift in demeanor.

“Stop making him uncomfortable.” She ordered, deciding to head back into her bedroom.

“This will be one of the greatest experiences of your life,” Ben declared, inching the car forward in the snail pace line.

Rey hummed, smiling whenever Ben looked back at her.

He was excited for this, for wanting share this experience with her. Rey could not help but feel flattered, yet pressured. She want to enjoy the drive-in as much as been believed she would.

The car moved forward an inch, before easing to a stop. At least Ben drove her car with care, unlike some people she knew.

For the short trip, Rey gave Ben the keys to her car, knowing how much he missed driving since moving out into an urban city area. Sadly, he rarely used his own car, only a few times a month. While Rey was protective over who drove her baby—a junker Falcon she spent every weekend for three months repairing—Ben’s smile of fascination was enough to ease any potential worries.

“Only two more cars, or three. I can't really see from this angle.” He assured her, eyes focused on his mirrors and the car in front of him.
Rey smirked, “Okay, Ben. I believe you.”

The entire thirty minute drive he’d been buzzing with new found energy, Rey high amused by how boyish his face became the closer and closer they came to their destination—the drive-in he gushed about weeks prior.

Of course, they had time to kill between the morning and going to the drive-in.

Most of the afternoon had been spent eating muffins—the other three people in the apartment scarce for some odd reason—and not really doing much else. Laziness around the apartment had been a struggle for Ben, becoming jittery when they sat for too long doing nothing. He’d read a book she loaned him for a few moments before huffing and reaching to contact someone with First Order or the Knights of Ren. Every time he attempted to do anything productive, Rey would effective snatch the offending object and hide the item deep in Finn’s room to be retrieved at a later time. Relaxing was a foreign concept to Ben, Rey discovering this alarmingly fast. Once electronics and work related materials were effective removed from his vicinity, Ben seemed to attempt relaxing with a better attitude, ‘out of sight, out of mind’ method working to their advantage. With serious coaxing Rey went as far as to convince him to take a nap.

Ben Solo for once in his adult life, napped.

Willing.

Okay, she did promise to nap with him too and it was mainly kissing and cuddling. Although, he did close his eyes for a solid fifteen minutes, and that was a win in Rey’s book.

“Have you seen the movies playing?” Ben asked as they drove up to the kiosk. He paid for their tickets, too quickly for Rey to protest, and drove on forward.

She pressed her lips together, holding back a retort for his needless act. She could pay for her own ticket just fine.

Her eyes found the marque by the front entrance, the double feature titles on display in red block letters. “Never seen either The Goonies or Sound of Music.” She frowned at the selections, “Isn’t Sound of Music a musical?”

“Yup,” He confirmed popping the ‘p’ at the end, not entirely pleased. “I was really hoping they’d have It’s a Wonderful Life instead. The theater switches between the two for the second feature during the holiday season. So this week Sound of Music, next week It’s a Wonderful Life.”

“He confirmed popping the ‘p’ at the end, not entirely pleased. “I was really hoping they’d have It’s a Wonderful Life instead. The theater switches between the two for the second feature during the holiday season. So this week Sound of Music, next week It’s a Wonderful Life.”

“Do they always play classics?” Rey wondered aloud.

“Only during the off season; during the summer new releases are played,” Ben a shred as he slowly drove through the paved aisles, watching out for kids running around the narrow stalls.

The lot was already halfway full, families, friends, and couples piling out of their cars and making their own little viewing areas. Trucks and SUVs parked backwards towards the ginormous projection screen, opening their hatches to create blanket forts and nests in the bed of their vehicles.

Edging a decent distance from the screen, Ben rolled into a slot, the mounds of asphalt elevating the car at a slight upward angle. He set the car in park, shutting the engine off.

“This is…” She gapped in awe as more vehicles began to pull into the lot, spanning at least seven and eight rows back.
“This is one of the last existing drive-ins in California, there’s only about three left.” He learned forward, glancing around the lot through the windshield. “As a kid, there would maybe twenty cars…now it’s gain notoriety, therefore popularity.” He explained, zipping his hoodie up. Glancing at his watch, Ben checked the time. “The first movie doesn’t start for another half an hour. Want to start setting up?”

His eyes held hers, excitement shining with edges of softness.

“Absolutely,” Rey agreed, reaching behind in the backseat for her grey blanket.

Getting out of the car, the two went to the trunk to pull out the lawn chairs. Rey followed Ben’s lead setting the chairs in front of the car. Ben then went to work to setting up their seats along with blankets, the wind from the ocean picking up over the hills. Nights were cold in the Ahch-To area, wind biting rather than the temperature dropping low degrees. Rey found it odd how many movie goers forgone the comfort of a heater to sit outside in the cold to watch a movie, yet nearly each and every car there followed a similar pattern. Grabbing the cooler with their snacks (“Never buy the concessions there; it’s all purposely hiked up because you can’t leave the lot once you pay. It’s worse than a regular movie theatre.”), Rey placed it by their chairs. Moving to go grab the thermos she left in the passanger seat, her blanket was suddenly drapped over her shoulders.

Spinning around, Rey opened her mouth to argue only to have a red beanie cap shoved on her head snugly.

“Sit, I’ll get everything else,” Ben ordered Rey, shuffling her along to her seat. His hands guiding her down, Rey sat, frowning up at Ben.

“I want to help,” She said, defiance edging in her tone.

Ben crossed his arms over his chest, watching her squirm with mirth. “And I want to take you out on a date. This is a date.”

Rey stuttered incoherently at his blunt statement, blinking down and away at the word ‘date’. They were in a relationship now, couples went out on dates….they just never went on a real date. Time and distance worked against a ‘real date.’

Well, until now.

A breathy chuckle escaped Ben, causing Rey’s stomach to tumble. On her head, she felt him bop the little puff ball on her beanie.

“I’ll be right back,” he muttered, walking back to the car.

Lifting her gaze from her lap, Rey regarded Ben quietly. For a long time she never considered spending time with someone in this capacity. Her friends were kind and brought her out of her shell when needed…but it was different with Ben. For most of the day they hardly spoke to one another, yet there was never a necessity to speak. Their communication with each other was spoke through looks, thoughtful gestures, held gazes. He understood her profoundly.

Someone as lonely as herself does not think of finding a person to complete them. When one is lonely, deep down, they believe they deserve to suffer through their intense loneliness.

No one ever says what happens when two people, who are equally lonely, find solace in each other.

She wonders what happens to them…
From over her shoulder, she heard Ben open and close the passenger door loudly. She doesn’t look away from him as he comes back with the thermos and a little battery operated radio.

“What’s wrong?” He asked, dropping down to sit on the lawn chair to her left. He sets the radio on top of the cooler lid, and thermos by his feet. “You have this pensive look on your face.”

“Nothing.” She answered pleasantly, twisting the corner of her blanket on her lap. Ben’s eyebrows rose, not quite believing her statement. Letting go of the blanket, she grasped his free hand with her left. “Just thinking about how much I like you.”

She squeezed his hand once.

He squeezed back twice.

“Well, that’s good because I really like you too,” he spoke clearly, not an ounce of hesitation or anxiety in his being.

Intertwining their fingers, Ben pressed his lips to the back of her hand. He gently dropped their hands, Rey keeping hers nearby to his.

On the screen, dancing popcorn and candy were projected. Turing away, Rey burrowed into her blanket feeling Ben’s eyes on her.

After a moment, his gaze moved to the screen.

Every so often, she’d feel his fingers brush hers before he final just held her hand for the duration of the first movie. Throughout *The Goonies*, she listened contently to him ramble off random facts he knew about the production or Stephen Spielberg. His voice hushed and concise, she’d lightly tug on his sleeve when he’d begin to go overboard with his explanations.

Halfway through the second movie, the wind picked up, whistling into the biting, cool night air. Sensing her shivering, Ben brought Rey to sit on his lap. He hissed quietly when her ice cold nose made contact with his warm neck. Whispered apologies and a shared blanket made the situation better. The two curled towards each other, Rey wrapping her arms around Ben’s neck while Ben held her close with an arm across her middle. Both watched the second movie with mild interest, though little facts once again made an appearance. This time she felt the rumble of his voice, despite how softly he spoke now that they were less than a few inches away from each other.

Towards the end of *Sound of Music*, Rey felt Ben sniffle, noticing his tears were held at bay. Leaning her head on his shoulder, she held him closer.

“Are you okay?” She muttered, watching as the Von Trapps left their home country.

“Yeah,” He hummed, “just an emotional movie…I’m deeply moved.”

“Alright.”

Her finger brushed away stray hair from his face; Ben caught her hand as she dropped it back to her side. He loosely held her hand for the rest of the film, only letting go when other viewers began to pack up.

Rey secretly smiled, feeling what must have been love, take root in her chest.
“I’ve never see the moon hang so low,” Rey murmured.

Across the water, the ivory quarter moon reflected off the glistening surface. The tide was low, the sand shading darker the closer the water lapped. As they drove back to her apartment, Ben had caught sight of the moon. He pulled them over the nearest outlook spot to watch the witching hour phenomenon.

She shifted on the hood of her car, her blanket tangled around her legs from crossing and uncrossing. Beside her, Ben leaned his elbows against his knees, squinting at the moon peeking in and out of the foggy skies.

“It’s only like this around two in the morning…you’ve never been out here this late?”

Rey shook her head, eyes remaining on the horizon.

“Let me guess, this was a common Ben Solo occurrence?” Rey quipped, eying him. An embarrassed, tight lipped smile graced his features, a helpless shrug followed soon after. A scoff-laugh came from the back of her throat. She leaned over and poked his bicep. “You were a punk-emo wannabe weren’t you? With the flannels and the poetry. Did you wear guy liner?” Her menacing squint did nothing to him, Ben staring her down with more pity then amusement.

“Excuse me?” Ben blinked owlishly behind his glasses, “I’ll have you know early to late two-thousands was the height of punk.”

“You did wear guy liner!” She chortled, falling back against her hood, legs flailing. Images of gawker, ganglier Ben emerged in her mind. Dressed in grungy flannels and heavy raccoon eyes, with his notebook tucked under his arm.

“It was cool!” Ben grumbled, slapping her legs away from accidently kicking his face. “And you have no room to talk, I’ve seen the amount of emo band t-shirts you own. A very classic hipster thing to do.” He chided, leaning on his side beside her.

“I’m a young adult, I can look as whatever however I want.” She teased back, wiggling closer to his radiating warmth. “I don’t think I would have gave you the time of day if I knew you then.”

Nearly hovering over her, he breathed lowly, “I would have done anything to just talk to you if you were here then.”

“Oh,” She whispered, unable to tear her gaze away from his genuine dark eyes. Rey shivered, unsure if it was due to cold temperature or Ben’s looming presence. Part of her was tempted to throw caution out the window and make love to him right then and there. To kiss him with every breath in her being, to hold him—clutch him to her body, living every second of the moment to its fullest…

Meanwhile the logical, more rational side of her brain reminded her of how freezing it actual was, and how she’d regret allowing their first time together to be on the hood of her Falcon.

“I’m sorry to break it to you, but we are not going at it on or in the Falcon.” Rey spoke up, breaking the building, pulsing tension between them.

Ben licked his lips, Rey feeling heat pool in her lower abdomen at the action, he remaining completely unaware of what he was doing to her. She swallowed, shifting her legs ever so slightly to alieve her coiling nerves.

Sighing, he whipped his head away from her, gazing sadly off into the horizon. “Well, there go all
my teenage fantasies,” Ben muttered with melodramatic flare, “Ruined, *forever.*” Turning back to her, he stared her straight on, and deadpanned. “*The humanity—*”

Belly laughter bubbled out of Rey, Ben never finishing his thought. Her hands flew up to grasp his face, gently caressing his jaw. His stumble tickled the pads of fingers. Chuckling, he pressed a quick kiss to the meat of her palm, his lips soft against her calloused skin. Any embarrassment she felt over her mechanic’s hands vanished while under his penetrating, earnest gaze. Ungrasping her hand, he leaned away to sit beside her.

Her heartbeat steadied, she relaxing against the hood of the car. Removing her gaze from the barely-there stars, Rey’s eyes naturally found Ben.

Dark eyes settled on the ocean, Ben adjusting his glasses high on his nose. From behind, she noticed anxious tension claw into his broad shoulders. Gradually, he slumped in on himself.

Pushing herself back up by her elbows, Rey scooted to Ben.

He had the same troubled expression from earlier that morning.

Rey bumped her shoulder against him, her eyes scrutinizing his face.

Paitently, she waited.

... ... ... ... ...

“I talked to my dad today.” He admitted, his voice caught in the whistling wind.

His stare steeled tightly on the moon.

“What did you…talk about?” She spoke tentatively.

He coughed, “Sea lions.”

Rey gave a tiny smile, “He likes to watch the—”

“—*sea lions on Sunday.*” They finished the thought simultaneously.

Surprised, Rey gaped dumbly at Ben while he nodded in agreement. He did not spare a glance at her.

“Yes, he has watched the sea lions every Sunday since I was three—when we moved out here.” Ben clarified, twisting and intertwining his fingers out of pattern. “I thought…it didn’t really occur
to me it was *Sunday*, until he sat beside me on our bench. I thought since I was gone…”

“…he would have stopped?”

He licked his lips, his head dropping, “Yes,” he muttered miserably. “I just thought…well who the fuck knows why I thought…” With the back of his hand, he pushed his glasses on the top of his head. Growling in the back of his throat, he pressed his palms to his closed eyes.

“Ben…”

“No.” Ben gritted out, yet Rey stood her ground, not flinching away. “I just…” He heaved a sigh, slumping further into himself. “Why can’t he be like normal estranged parents and not be fucking sentimental?” His hands dropped back to lap, fidgeting together frantically. “I bet he still even has my sea lion plushy in my bedroom.”

He fell silent, his ragged breathing mingling with the undertone of the ocean’s current.

Crossing then uncrossing her arms, Rey sat up straighter. Kicking her legs out, she braced her hands down on the hood of the blue-grey car. Fingers thrummed against the metal, her mind swirling on what to do.

“I…have a pilot teddy bear.” She blurted out clearly into the crisp air.

“What?” He tore his attention from self-loathing to her innocent statement.

“I have a pilot teddy bear,” Rey repeated, hitting her constants, “no idea where he came from, but had him since I was a baby. His name is Annie.”

“Annie is a girl’s name,” Ben mumbled, setting his glasses back on.

“Say’s gender norms,” She rebutted defensively, “I don’t know why it’s his name, but it’s one of the truest facts in life I know.”

She had Annie for all her life, the teddy bear hers before she was placed in the system. He was the one sole item Rey had the privilege to call her own until she was eleven, when she was able to keep her first book and journal. Annie sat on her bed, went with her to school, rode with her on the train and he was tucked in her arm as she flew to the United States when she was seventeen.

“I like it…I never said I didn’t like it,” he corrected, sitting up a bit from his slouch.

He seemed a *little* better…

Hopping off the hood of the car, Rey held her hand out to Ben. “Come on, let’s get back. I’ll drive.” She insisted.

Without a fight, Ben handed her the keys.

She pocketed them, her hand still stretched out.

He blinked, a sigh stuck in his throat. Pained by the onslaught of emotions he’d been holding back for the day. “I…”

“We’re not leaving until you take my hand.”

Planting his feet on the ground, Ben stood up. Not a beat later he took Rey’s offered hand.
She squeezed once.

He squeezed back twice.

Behind them, the moon lowered further into the sea, the fog covering the midnight blue sky in hues of hazy grey.

Soft chestnut curls filled her vision, before she was set back down on the floor. Colorful plastic toy rings and large blocks littered the floor, her tiny hands reached for the bright red ring.

“Rey, honey,” the woman’s voice called out, “look who came to visit!”

Two older men blurred into her world, with greying beards and smiles. The older fellow with bright blue eyes and lingering hints of reddish hair, bent down to her level.

“Hello Rachel,” he cooed, “did you miss your Grandad?”

Her arms reached for him, fingers trying to grasp him with their poor function. He chuckled lightly, doing her a favor and picking her up.

“Rey, this is my friend Annie,” He nodded to other man with him, a bit younger than her Grandad and a bit taller. His eyes were blue too…

The other man held out a tan teddy bear towards her, goggles and pilots cap graced its head.

She happily snatched the bear, crushing the plushy into her chest.

“She can call the bear Annie,” Her Grandad declared delightfully…

“Ben, she cannot call—”

Rey’s eyes flew open, gasping for air. Blinking blurrily, she felt hot tears spilling down her cheeks. She instinctively moved to wipe away her mess, only to make contact with weight.

Ben’s arm was drapped over her waist, his nose buried deep into her hair, brushing against the back of her neck.

Right…she let him be the big spoon for once. He appeared to need it, Rey guiding his arms around her body once they were in bed. He obliged with little excitement, but by the way he completely engulfed her and pressed exceedingly close, he liked the change.

With her free arm, she wiped away her tears.

Inhaling deeply, she exhaled her confused melancholy.

She had no idea why she’d been crying, the dream…or possibly nightmare, gone from her memory. Not a chance to catch what flickered through her mind…she safely assumed it has been the same dream plaguing her since she was taken into the system. Never able to recall what transpires, only the teddy bear, Annie, handed to her and a faceless man suggesting the name.

Turing over in Ben’s arms, Rey curled into his chest.
In his warmth, she fell back into dreamless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Well...there is quite a bit to unpack there.
- Han and Ben
- Ben And Rey
- Rey and her teddy hear
- REY’S FREAKING DREAM!!
Discuss and seek solace in the comments! Let me know what you think, what you loved, what your theories are (if your theory was right); tell me! I love discussing the fic with my readers!
Look How Old You've Become

Chapter Summary

Rey is busy. Ben also somehow finds himself to be busy.

Chapter Notes

Well, a little earlier than intended! But also a little shorter than usual, but will hopefully be worth it!

I am moving updates to once a week as I begin another semester next week :)

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ben you need to let go of me,” Rey murmured into her companion’s bare shoulder.

Her alarm went off ten minutes ago; she need to go—now.

Tuesday mornings were busy for Rey—hell, Tuesdays in general were her ‘someone come and smite me’ days. To put simply, Tuesdays were awful because she over booked herself, every single time. Classes then work, then walking the neighborhood dogs, then dropping into the university newspaper office to proof read the latest issue and give her vote on pieces. By the evening, she went to The Castle to work on papers, readings, and editing until she needed to close up shop by eleven.

Being held down by a giant, warm mass of a man put a dent in her tightly wound schedule.

Lifting her head past Ben’s messy mop of dark curls, she caught sight of the time on her computer. Fifteen past six; she has seven-thirty class to slodge through…

Rey’s huff morphed into a sigh.

“Ben—love, you need to move.”

Wiggling a bit, she was able to move enough to glimpse at his relaxed, sleepy expression. Rested, lips slightly parted, Ben appeared younger in his sleep. Boyish mixed with finely man features; he became more endearing the longer she gazed in stillness.

While she’d enjoy a repeat of Monday morning—languid kisses, hesitant hands learning and discovering. Smooth-yet-rigid lines of their bodies mingling together, as they slowly found their balance within in each other’s touch.
Nothing went beyond venturing caresses, and the skin on their chests brushing against one another in faint bursts. With gentle coaxing, she been able to guide the stuttering until speechless Ben’s hands into palming her breasts and pressing his hands lower than her abdomen... She just did not expect him to learn how to make her breathless so quickly.

She shuddered an exhale.

Of course, that could not happen—Rey had obligations despite Ben’s presence. Sunday and Monday were the exceptions. They were able to laze until their drive-in date, then Monday—well, she veered a little off her own schedule to accommodate Ben’s visit. Her usual Monday morning run was put on hold, along with her free writing time and lunch with Leia.

Ben’s mother arranged herself as a permanent fixture in Rey’s routine. Over the last four weeks, Monday lunches, or brunches depending on their respective availability, were a weekly occurrence. Leia would take Rey to local café or bistros the older woman liked during her previous time in the Ahch-To area.

During these lunches, Rey did her best to separate Leia from her brother. Never stated explicitly, Rey knew Leia and Luke were twins, Ben’s rants enough for her to piece together the entire picture. Close siblings, though apparently not extremely close. Leia hardly mentioned her brother.

The previous day’s lunch had been…different.

Ben accompanied them on their lunch; which had been a delight and a pain.

His shoulder’s hunched, he bit his nails—a habit Rey never noticed until that afternoon—and fidgeted the entire meal. Ben felt exceedingly awkward he did not need to say it, both women were aware. Conversation’s moved at snail pace, no one in the trio knowing who should ask what and talk to who. After all, the lunch had been the first time Ben and Leia sat together since she left a little over a month prior.

Not until their food arrived did the stilted conversation begin to flow into a steady rhythm. Speaking in manageable pieces, Ben’s shoulders were no longer hiked to his ears. His mother’s impending move and their family crises were strictly off topic, neither verging into the topic once.

Relaxing into each other’s presence, Leia’s motherly nature came out for both Rey and Ben asking about their health, work, and school. Through these questions a subtle transformation transpired in Ben, who came to resemble a moody, begrudging teenager at his mother’s, probing.

A twinge of jealousy singed at their nagging and boding. Despite the uneasy tension and the looming estrangement of his other family members, Ben had people who gave a damn about him.

Ben’s parents cared—she could not say the same for herself.

His fingers lazily brushed the sliver of exposed skin on her hip.

Twisting in Ben’s encircling arms, Rey edged up on her elbows. She squinted at him, her blurry vision momentarily sharpening.

His jaw twitched.

The bastard was not asleep.
“Fuck you, Ben Solo,” she grumbled.

His arms around his middle tightened, she pulled back into his bare chest. A rupture of giggles filled the room, his hand finding the curve of where her ribs and her waist met. More hearty laughs bellowed out of her as he tickled the sensitive area mercilessly.

“Stop—stop,” she heaved between catching her breath. “Ben!” Her face pressed against his solid form, Rey feeling chuckles rumble through his ribcage.

“No,” he grumbled into her hair, brushing his feather light kisses against her skin. Rey squirmed for freedom, Ben keeping her in his hold for a second longer before releasing her out of his grasp. His arms dropped to his sides, allowing Rey to sit up properly.

Huffing at his dramatics, Rey began to climb over him to her closet. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed his hand slowly creeping towards her once more. A stern glare schooled him, Ben sagging despondently further into the bed at her departure.

Adjusting the hem of her shirt, Rey stared at her clothing options for a second, realizing she needed to do some laundry—soon. Resolute, she reached for the first oversized sweater she could find, a knitted burgundy garment, and a questionably clean pair of dark wash skinny jeans hanging over the rack. Gathering a couple more of her belongings, she turned back to Ben.

He was pretending to sleep again, his eyes slightly closed, yet his subtle smirk gave him away.

“Hey, I’m going to be pretty busy today,” Rey started, believing it best to approach the subject gradually. “As in…I probably won’t see you until maybe…midnight?” Her wince caused his eyebrows to shoot up.

“Oh,” he uttered, tucking his arm behind his head. “So…”

“Yeah,” she muttered apologetically, “you are on your own today—I mean not truly on your own because you still have Mitaka—”

“I believe Mitaka has effectively deserted me for Finn,” he deadpanned, shrugging at the matter.

“Oh, I would say that, you two had a wonderful meeting yesterday,” Rey forced a smile, Ben not completely buying it by his perpetual frown. “Okay—it was awful and terrible to be witness to; how are you two co-workers?”

For the majority of the afternoon, Ben and Mitaka had dry and stilted conversations, one becoming too sarcastic while another went to blunt. They never seemed to find the right rhythm with each other, except when they were on the same page about anything, whether it be books or food. Everything outside the common ground seemed to strained or simply disconnected.

“We work well together when we both actually want to work,” Ben defended, shifting to lay on his side.

“Well, maybe you two can figure it out today,” she suggested, heading to the door. She heard a disgruntled mutter of disagreement from Ben. “You know what? Finn mentioned wanting to go out to lunch with you today.”

Ben frowned, adjusting his glasses on her face. “He did?”
God, she was really going to push Ben into the sharks, wasn’t she? But he needed to get out of the apartment and talk to someone who wasn’t her or Mitaka—or micro-syllables with Finn. “Yup.” She beamed a little two brightly, Ben squinting at her concernedly. “I think it would be great,” she nodded once, biting her lips together, “for the two of you to get to know each other. Did you know he is related Lando Calrissian?”

“My Uncle Lando?” Ben spoke in disbelief—Rey wasn’t too sure how long Ben and Lando had gone without talking, but by the older man’s information the two caught up every couple of weeks. At least not all of Ben’s familial relationships were fraught.

“Yes,” Rey confirmed, “what a small world we live in.”

“I…I guess I’ll talk to Finn. I mean he is just down the hall,” he considered, sitting straighter.

“Now that’s the spirit!” Her grin toned down, Ben relaxing once her strained emotion gave way. He appreciated when she was genuine with him, rather than the false chipper-ness he found her displaying around others. He never knew the effort she put forth to appear textbook definition happy.

“Don’t you have class?”

“Shit, right,” she cursed, rushing out of the room with her clothes clutched to her chest.

From the bed, Ben fondly watched her rush about the hall, her loose hair whipping around in her haste. The bathroom door accidentally slammed loudly behind her, an apologetic shout followed a beat after.

He felt himself grin; she was a bit reckless and too honest for her own good, but endearing. Ben knew she’d probably been cornered to force him into a lunch with her friends. Forced cheery attitude and the random drop of suggestion were glaringly obvious. The girl was an awful liar, but the evidence cleared any doubt.

Rey was genuine.

Mid-way through listening to a natural science lecture, Rey felt her phone buzz. Dropping her gaze, she found there was an incoming message from Ben. Frowning, she tapped the icon.

Ben

I don’t think BB likes me.

Rey

Why? You two seemed to be getting along fine.

Ben

Yeah, when you’ve been around

Ben

I don’t think he likes how we’ve been kicking him out of the room.
Rey

I highly doubt it.

He doesn’t even sleep in my bed at night.

He likes to use his doggy bed in the living room.

Ben

Then explain to me why he is in perpetual growl from the moment he set eyes on me this morning?

Rey

Maybe you sat in his favorite spot?

Ben

What’s his favorite spot?

Rey

Right cushion of the sofa.

He only lets me sit there.

Ben

Damn it.

Rey

You’ve just screwed yourself over buddy.

Ben

I realize that.

Rey

Just move and give him a doggy treat.

The box is in the pantry.

He’s a very easy going dog once he receives some affection :)

Ben

Thank you

“So, Ben—if that truly is your real name—”
“It is, as far as I am aware of,” Ben answered carefully, trying to sink under Rose’s intense gaze. For a tiny woman, she was quite intimidating. While Ben had encountered such women, raised by Leia Organa—arguably the woman who brought ‘though she be little, she be fierce’ to life—Rose Tico’s brand of intensity caused Ben to be at attention.

They sat in a little bar and grill off of main street, Finn and Rose sitting across from Ben with notepads and ‘intimidating’ glares. Finn looked more like a tiny puppy while Rose seemed to want to rip his throat out.

“Then tells us a bit about yourself, Benjamin,” Rose sat up straight, a pen poised at the ready.

Ben blinked, lips twitching in amusement, “Rose, we’ve already met—you know me, I’m pretty sure you drunkenly called me last night to tell me no other tree’s compare to my form.”

“I was weak and my sober buddy failed me,” she defended tersely, her sharp eyes shifting cut throat to Finn. “Anyways, me and my associate have a few questions for you.”

“I’ve been demoted to ‘associate’?” Finn whimpered, Ben sensing this was not the first time Rose has lowered their relationship status. Catching the other man’s gaze, Finn straightened up, coughing awkwardly into his sleeve.

“Yes,” she stated simply, not bothering to spare her boyfriend a glance. Tapping her pen on the top of her notepad, she regarded Ben with an air of authority. “As Rey’s closest friends, we have compiled a list if attributes we believe would benefit Rey in a partner.”

“Don’t you think this is a little excessive?” Ben felt his soul momentarily leave his body at Rose’s scathing narrowed eyes.

She pinned him with her gaze, “She is serious about you—innocent, sweet, selfless Rey—”

“Don’t lay it on too thick Rose,” Finn interrupted, hastily.

Everyone at the table knew Rey to an extremely loose definition of such qualities. While innocent, she did occasional have a crude sense of humor, and her sweetness only came to play whenever a furry creature was within a five foot radius. The term selfless on the other hand…generous use of the word—Rey apt at surviving in the reality of the world, but surprisingly thoughtful and giving when she thought no one was paying attention.

“Anyways,” Finn took over once he noticed how uncomfortable Ben grew under Rose’s scrutinizing eyes, “We just want to get to know you a little better—nothing crazy—”

“But we did our research and homework on you bucko,” Rose reminded him. “I want to like you —”

“You do like him—” Finn interjected.

“—but sometimes you need be the bad cop,” She set her notepad down, leaning back into her seat with her arms crossed. “And clearly bad cop cannot be Finn.”

“I understand that reasoning,” Ben concurred, nodding sagely in Finn’s direction. Over the last four days Ben came to a conclusion about Finn; he was a great guy, but lacked direction and was kind of a push over when it came to stronger personalities. Of course, he’d seen the guy fight back a little, but never with malice or heat. An easy going guy—a lover not a fighter. Respectable quality Ben was curious to know if one acquired over time or inherently possessed.
Across from him, Finn pursed his lips, “Okay…Let’s just start, please.”

“Are you a virgin?”

“Excuse me?”

“Rose!”

---

**Ben**

*Your friends are insane.*

Rey stumbled, Mr. Yoda’s pup nearly dragging her to the ground with his vicious tug. Gritting her teeth, she glanced back down at her phone—another message from Ben. Over the last five hours he’d been sending her sporadic texts; questions about BB, about where something was located in the apartment, if she preferred whole milk or almond milk…stupid or thoughtful, Rey was slowly losing her nerve with the texting.

She loved the man, but she was busy. That morning, she believed she laid it out the clear she’d be preoccupied the entire day. It never occurred to Rey she’d need to lay down ground rules when it came to texting considering it was their primary form of contact for so long.

Debating briefly on texting him back, Rey helped the scrappy pup to the side, sitting down on an available bench. Tapping through her phone’s settings, she muted Ben’s notifications.

She’d unmute in the evening.

---

“…have you ever participated in recreational drugs?” Finn asked, picking up his glass for a sip of water.

Biting his lips together, Ben firmly shook his head for the umpteenth time, “No. Technically isn’t that question simply a rewording of ‘have you ever used marijuana, cocaine, or meth?’ ”

“Its is; we were trying to see if you caught on,” Rey said, scribbling notes on to her paper. “What’s next—”

“Aren’t you going to ask me any questions about my current relationship with Rey—you do realize she and I will always be friends first—”

“Umh!” Finn called out, “Right there you are implying you two would break up.”

Ben huffed, crossing his arms over his chest, “I have zero intention in breaking up with Rey—furthest thing from my mind.”

“Have you ever entertained the possibility of breaking up with Rey?” Rose asked, leaning forward to watch him carefully.

“No,” he spoke truthfully.

What he and Rey had was new, still fresh. They’d only been official for three weeks, yet somehow
if felt much longer. Amylin made Ben promise before he left, he’d not self-sabotage. Everyone liked Rey—his mother, Amylin, Phasma, Mitaka, Poe...even Hux was a tad bit fond of her. Ben could not fuck up—if he fucked up, well he wasn’t too sure what he’d do.

Possibly wallow in self-pity—which was not an exaggeration. He did not want to believe he became dependent on Rey; he was a grown man, and had lived on his own for years. He did not need to rely on a twenty-one year old girl all the time for companionship. However, Ben could not deny his life was infinitely better with her in it. Waking up beside her, with all her drool and messy hair. Watching her concentrate on writing, tongue sticking out to the side and nose scrunched up. Kissing her randomly, because she was there and sometimes when he did not have the words for his emotions, actions seemed to be the best option.

Of course, this was only when they were in the same location.

“I’ve never been one for dating,” Ben admitted, “and I feel uncomfortable using the word, because I feel like it’s a bit childish.” Rose and Finn shared a look; Ben decided it best to ignore the two. “Main point, I don’t pursue romantic relationships—it’s never been an interest for me, but with Rey it’s different.”

He did not need to give further explanation when he already gave his blood type and confirmed ‘yes, his parents are divorced’ and ‘no, I do not like Twizzlers’. Rose and Finn were being beyond thorough to the point of nonsense; Rey’s friends did not need to know every little detail about him, when he did not care enough to reciprocate. Not to say he did not like her friends…but he did find them intrusive.

“Are we done?”

Rose considered for a moment, “One more question—if you were on a deserted island, what would you take with you?”

He recalled the same question being asked weeks back by Rey. They’d been walking back from Amilyn’s, taking a short cut through the park—he’d foolishly replied he’d take a book. Emily Dickinson. Meanwhile, Rey smartly replied she’d take a person—him to be exact.

Considering his options carefully, Ben knew his answer.

“A person—maybe Rey.”

Rose grinned brightly, while Finn gave a secret thumbs up.

Great...he didn’t completely fuck up.

---

Ben

I take back what I said.

Your friends aren’t that bad.
After lunch with Rose and Finn, Ben found himself with more free time than he anticipated. For a brief moment he considered heading back to Rey’s apartment and waiting until she came home, killing the time with reading more of the journals…

Yet Rey’s tone from that morning rang in his mind. She appeared to genuinely want him to get out and explore, do more with his time while she was gone. Ben did not blame her—he did in fact spend the majority of his time in Ahch-To at the apartment or with Rey.

Maybe she was getting sick of him…

Brushing the thought away, he decided to take a walk around town, venture through the streets he once roamed with ease.

Silently, he allowed his feet to follow a muscle memory path.

Typing notes speedily on her laptop, Rey’s eyes continued to skim the article. Words blurred together. She pushed her glasses up and rubbed her eye, blinking to find some comfort. Computers can be awful on the eyes, Rey swear that her vision grew worse the longer she used technology.

Prepared to go back to proofreading, a hand waved on front of her face.

“Hey,” Rey eyes flew to the side to see Mara leaning against the desk. “How’s it going dork?”

Confused by the sudden acknowledgement from fellow proofreader and classmate, Rey regarded Mara apprehensively. “Not much…” Realizing she need to demonstrate some semblance of manners, Rey smiled tightly at Mara. “How about you?”

Mara’s bright auburn-red hair shined dully under the florescent lights, twisted and pulled into intricate ponytails. She must have colored it since the last time Rey saw her peer.

“Fine,” She shrugged a shoulder up, still leaning against Rey’s desk. Neither woman spoke, Mara looking at her nails, while Rey tried to focus on the article before her…which proved difficult with the intrusive presence.

“Can I help you—"

“One of the main columnist is graduating early at semester, and Professor Mothma wanted me to talk to you to see if you’d like the position…since I’m being moved up to assistant editor,” Mara stated with a bored tone, feigning disinterest.

Rey blinked, lips working to find an answer, “I—"

Mara huffed dramatically, “I told her you’d probably say no, since your busy and everything,” she droned, avoiding eye contact, “But like, you were my first choice and, like I get it if you want to say ‘no’, since journalism isn’t really your thing—but like, I figured since it is an advice column and you mostly write non-fiction its like one in the same,” she rambled speedily, Rey’s eyebrows rising as Mara continued to speak. Rey was sure this was the most she ever head the woman speak the nearly three years they’d known each other. “And…you’re like, really smart and talented, and I
guess I respect you enough to work with you on a daily basis.”

All Rey could think about was the amount of ‘like’s Mara used in one breath.

“Oh,” she uttered, adjusting her glasses higher on her nose. “That’s…thoughtful of you Mara—”

“Ugh,” the other woman groaned, “I knew you’d say no—”

“I’m not saying no!” Rey rushed out in a panic, looking back up at Mara with full attention. “I just…didn’t expect it.”

When Rey joined the university newspaper she never thought she’d end up staying with the club for most of her college career. She needed some writing experience outside of her classes on a resume. Initially, she wanted to be involved in the university’s literary journal *Light/Dark*, but found all the student positions had been filled at the time. In her mind, the next logical choice was the newspaper—and for the following three years she had proofread and occasionally was asked to throw in a creative piece in the ‘Student Voice’ section.

Otherwise, Rey faded into the shadows.

Until now…with Mara promoted and apparently like Rey’s work and personality adequately to withstand being in the same room with her for long periods of time. Who would have thought?

While she’d never been interested in journalism, writing an advice column intrigued her. Simple and quick, she’d seen their previous advice columnist write up her spot within twenty minutes. Rey could do that…and maybe she might end up liking it. She wasn’t one to turn down something simply because she was afraid.

“What’s the time commitment? I want to be able work my schedule around for it.” Rey asked, saying an unspoken ‘yes’ to Mara’s offer.

The other young woman beamed, pulling up a chair to sit beside Rey.

---

Ben knocked sharply on the door.

Nothing happened after a few minutes. Fearing he may have read the office hours wrong, his eyes drifted to the posted calendar.

*Tuesdays 3-5pm*

*bring assignment—no assignment, no meeting*

He scowled at the side note. Of course his policies have not changed—even after a decade. Glancing at his watch again, Ben decided another try would do no harm.

Raising his fist, he knocked on the forsaken door again, his courage maintaining.

“It’s unlocked, come in.” The long forgotten, yet haunted disdained voice called out from inside the office.
Licking his lips and closing his eyes, Ben inhaled deeply.


He turned the doorknob and opened the door slowly, his frame filling the majority of the doorway. The last time he’d been in that specific doorway he’d effectively broke the door’s hinges off. Campus security helped escort him off campus immediately, and his parents received the bill for property damage.

Luckily, he was merely suspended and not expelled.

Though that did not stop Ben from half expecting security to tense up at his presence or ask him to leave campus. However, neither happened. Ben walked across the quad with ease and not another glance from students or professors—he’d either changed drastically in appearance since leaving Ahch-To, or the university rotated out several members of the faculty with new shiny employees.

Oh, how times have changed.

Sitting at the same worn and tried desk was Luke Skywalker; still dressed in the grey and brown baggy clothes, along with his odd smelling tea to his right.

Ben wanted to say time stood still for Skywalker, after all the office (almost) perfectly matched his memory. The tall, surrounding bookshelves and roaming cats brought forth memories—neither pleasant nor unpleasant, but memories stored away forever in Ben’s mind. Sitting at his uncle’s desk as a kid, reading all the books he could reach—the classics, new releases, horror, sci-fi...there was once a bean bag chair where the new cat tree sat. A cat tree where R2 poked his silver head out of one of the cubbies. Leave it to the princely cat to get his own luxury in the office. He remember how the bean bag chair was his—begging his parent’s for one and dragging it across town to Luke’s office and snuggly shoved into the corner. The corner where he distinctly remembered reading *The Scavenger and the Lost Prince* for the first time.

Now that he thought about it, the copy he owned was originally Luke’s. Ben unintentionally stole it that day, and never intended on returning the book. He briefly wondered if Skywalker knew after all these years what happened to his first edition copy.

Time only seemed to touch Luke in its cruelest ways. He aged well, Ben noticed the signs of unrelenting bitterness in those blue eyes. Luke’s beard was more grizzly than Ben thought possible for his formerly clean cut uncle and the down turn of his mouth brought prominent wrinkles.

While Ben grew into himself, Luke tried his best to hide within.

Cool blue eyes met dark brown, both guarded exceptionally well. The student and the master meeting once again.

“Ah, I was wondering when you’d show up,” Luke greeted Ben sagely. He set down the paper he was reading, bleeding with his trademark green ink he loathed to this day.

Ben swallowed, “Dr. Skywalker.”

“Come take a seat,” Luke offered with little room for argument. Nodding once, Ben listened. The chair’s frame was the same while the formerly paisley cushion had been replaced with a burnt orange pinstripe. Still gaudy in its own right despite the change. “Your mother mentioned you were in town.”

Ben’ eyebrows shot up. “You two still talk?”
“Every Thursday at six in the afternoon like clockwork,” Luke uttered clearly, picking back up the paper he’d been grading. He eyed Ben tersely. “Just because you don’t talk to me doesn’t mean no one else in the family does.”

His pen scraped across the paper sharply, crossing out an entire section.

Ben withheld a wince.

“So, are you going to just sit there or are you going to talk to me? Maybe finally give an apology?”

“For what?” Ben spat out, reeling himself back in an instant later. His eyes focused on the seventies style carpet, trying to focus on the stain of coffee he spilled ages ago that never faded away even after twelve years. Breathing and breathing out, he made eye contact with his uncle once more. “Why do I need to apologize when you were to one who claimed I plagiarized? I never once plagiarized in my life, and your claim was the last straw—”

Luke watched him carefully, eyes trying to decipher the man before him—as though he vaguely recognized him. “And yet you still made the decision to leave—”

“Because my life was falling apart here.” Ben stated honestly, not quite intending to feel tears of frustration prickle in his eyes. He exhaled, rubbing his hands together, bringing back his focus. He could not reel, he could not spiral. He could not be old kid-Ben in front of Luke. Not in front of Luke. “I need you to understand…at the time my dad and I had a strained relationship, then we had the accident—”

“Which you caused—”

Ben ignored him, continuing through before he flew off the rails, “—my parents divorced and my mother moved away. Then you—you and all of your teachings, mentoring,” Ben shook his head, sniffing quickly. “You were a traitor to me—you own nephew and you believed everyone else—”

“Because you didn’t have a good track record, Ben.”

“I’m your family!” Ben cracked, his fist clenching on the armrests. His eyes never left Luke’s the older man tensing for a moment before relaxing his shoulder. His head remained high, regarding Ben with quiet thought. “I—” He choked on air for a moment, steeling himself once more. “I did not come here to yell at you, or apologize or even force you to apologize.” He licked his lips, leaning back against the chair, trying his best to sit up straight. Mentally, Ben told himself to be an adult and to not revert back to child in his uncle’s presence. “I came here because…we are going to see each other on Thursday, and I’d rather we be civil.”

“That’s mature of you,” Luke said plainly, his tone neither positive or negative.

Once again, Luke gave no indication of his thoughts, allowing Ben to sit in his own worry. Somethings never change.

“I’m thirty-one, almost thirty-two,” Ben reminded him.

“Age has nothing to do with maturity,” the older man muttered, as though speaking from experience. He smirked a bit, “Happy early birthday, by the way. Think it’d be buried under the Thanksgiving hype?”

“One can only hope.”

As he grew older, Ben became less fond of birthdays. Most years it was lost in the chaos of
Thanksgiving break and the holiday, landing on Thanksgiving itself several times in his life. Like this upcoming Thursday, Ben once against trapped in the Thanksgiving-birthday conundrum. His mother wanted to combine the two occasions, while Han wanted him to milk it out and celebrate his birthday separately. Of course, Ben did not truly have a say since Leia and Han would hash it out loudly.

While attending university, birthdays ran a little differently. Cassian, Hux, and Phasma forced him to go out to eat of his choosing, no matter the day. They were there for his first shot and his first hangover. Birthdays continued with the addition of his friends significant others; Jyn a permanent fixture, followed by the revolving door Hux and Phasma entertained to get a rise out of the other.

Though the last three years were different—his closest friends moved to another country, while Hux and Phasma became busy with their own personal lives. Then his mother was back in his life, along with Amilyn, Ben found himself spending his birthday at the end of which ever week with the two. His actual birthday remained untouched.

He found it odd Luke felt the need to mention it.

“If I may ask,” Luke spoke slowly, still refusing to acknowledge Ben’s earlier display, “what brings the visit? You haven’t come back to Ahch-To for nearly a decade and now…”

“And now I decided to visit. I don’t need to disclose that to you,” Ben replied professionally. He adjusted his glasses higher on his nose, “Can we simply agree not to let our relationship effect Thursday’s dinner?”

Luke nodded firmly, “Call it a done deal; I might not entirely like you kid, but my sister comes first.”

“Great…” Ben sighed, standing up. “While…,” he held his tongue, knowing his next words would not be genuine. Best be honest with Luke now rather than allow his uncle to find his flaws once more. “While this hasn’t exactly been pleasant, nor did it go the way I anticipated—have a good afternoon.”

He forced his best polite smile, Luke not returning the sentiment.

Concluding he was not going to achieve much more in this impromptu meeting, Ben stalked out of the office.

Reaching the doorway, close to sweet freedom, Luke called for him to stop.

“Yes Dr. Skywalker?” Ben asked turning tightly on his heel.

Luke smirked lightly, picking up another poor soul’s paper, “Give my warm regards to Rey.”

Ben’s mind froze.

What?

Chapter End Notes

Welllll...interesting things are happening. Was the Luke and Ben interaction not what you expected? If it wasn't, then I am doing my job right.
And Rey...well she was busy. *shrugs* Our girl does have a life outside of Ben.

Let me know what you think! Comments and Kudos are always welcomed; I enjoy discussing the fic with my readers!
“Excuse me, can you repeat that?”

Ben strode full force back into the office, shutting the door soundless behind him. He was not here to create a scene—but how the fuck did Skywalker know Rey?

Luke shrugged carelessly, “Give my warm regards to Rey,” the older man reiterated. Ben stared him down, his uncle not flinching under his gaze. “I don’t see what the problem is, she is your girlfriend correct?”

Ben squinted at him, confused on how Luke knew such a detail. “How—”

“Your mother and I talk, remember?” Luke tapped his pen lightly on his desk, “But that’s not where I know her from.”

“Then where do you know her from?” Ben said sternly, his ground unwavering.

“A sort of former student of mine,” Luke answered vaguely, fiddling with his green pen. “Bright girl—too good for you to be honest, but I guess her compassion is an occasional downfall.”

Ben worried his bottom lip, contemplating his uncle’s words. Rey knew Skywalker…was even a former students of his, yet she never mentioned him. Did she know he and Skywalker were related, or did it merely slip her mind that the very Luke he complained about was one in the same of the
man she knew? After all, it would not be the first time they found their lives oddly interconnected.

“Oh,” Ben muttered, his eyes eyeing Luke warily. “She never mentioned she was in your class.”

“She’s not,” Luke addressed firmly, “so you have nothing to worry about. I’m not ‘corrupting’ her writing or anything of that sort,” he shook his head, releasing a low chuckle. “She’s a little too rebellious in her writing to be my student.”

“She’s too good to be your student,” Ben shot back, feeling swelling pride for Rey. She’d grown greatly in her writing over the course of their friendship, less apprehensive and indirect in her approach. Over a couple of months she’d transformed to be steady, clear, and melodious in her tone. A refined voice. Her talent would be exceedingly difficult for Luke to hone and center within a classroom setting—especially his classroom setting.

“You were too good to be my student,” his uncle stated quietly, finally making direct eye contact with Ben since he reentered the room. “Far greater…,” he swallowed tightly, suddenly overcome with emotion, “far greater than I think I ever gave you credit for—and I panicked. I feared you’d realize I would never be able to help you or guide you—”

“So you decided to push me away instead?” Ben felt his voice raise; he inhaled deeply, hoping to reel himself back into a calmer state of mind. He found himself behaving younger and less in control around Luke. Mentally, Ben reminded himself to call Amylin for an impromptu phone session. He had a feeling he’d need it.

Luke sagged into his sigh, “It was wrong for me to do that—”

“Why are you telling me this now?” Ben asked, sharply interjecting on his uncle’s belated apology. “You telling me this does nothing—”

“I’m telling you this because I care about you,” Luke argued back, standing up from his chair. The two were not at eyelevel, Ben finding himself towering over his uncle. As strange occurrence, the last time Ben stood near the older man he’d been hunched in on himself and a few inches shorter, experiencing another growth spurt in his late teens.

“If you cared about me, you wouldn’t have lied and incriminated my name!” Ben growled, glad the desk was between him and his uncle. His fists clenched and unclenched repeatedly, hoping to find some grip within himself to not react physically.

“It was never my intention—I—I was going to clear your name with the Dean; you didn’t need to leave, Ben,” his uncle explained tiredly, far too old to be handling a back and forth with Ben on this scale. “You need to understand, I was between a rock and a hard place. Past offenses and anger issues did not help your case—”

“I’ve gotten better,” Ben objected heatedly. “I’m not a fucking ticking time bomb anymore.”

Luke smiled slightly, a little light shining in his eyes, “I know. Believe it or not Ben, you have many great defenders.”

“Then why was it so hard for you to be one of them?” he asked, hating how his voice broke unintentionally. Crying about Luke felt demeaning—like he was a boy begging for love and attention.

Well, aren’t you doing that now? A nagging voice, reminding Ben of Rey tethered listlessly to him.
Luke…oddly enough was trying. Something Ben still could not quite comprehend.

But he wasn’t apologizing the way Ben envisioned.

An ignorant, possibly naïve, side of him imagined several scenarios. His uncle asking for forgiveness and welcoming him back with open arms, as though Ben were a sweet child in his eyes once more. Not the hotheaded, disgruntled teen and young adult. Or becoming ridiculously successful, Luke begging for a moment with Ben, and denying him in front of everyone…only to welcome him with open arms.

Actually, every scenario involved Luke welcoming him back with little tribulations.

*A subconsciously desire to belong,* the airy voice of Amylin reminded him lightly.

“You really just want to belong, Ben,” Amylin stated plainly, her usually sympathy vacant.

“I’m fine,” he remarked plainly, not entirely fond of the discussion topic. “I don’t need them,” he said lowly, counting the tile squares on the wall behind her.

“Everyone needs someone,” Amylin replied readily, “Someone to listen, someone to understand…sometimes this person is not blood,” she sat forward, holding her hand out in offering to him. Begrudgingly, Ben took her hand, palm down. She brought over her other hand to rest on top his, holding him firmly. Her warm eyes stared intently into his brown, “Ben, I am telling you this because I care about you and believe you need to understand this for your own health—you do not need your family to love you to feel important or loved…because they might not ever love you the way you want them to—your uncle and your parents will not live up to your expectations. No one will live up to anyone’s expectations. But never doubt, if someone truly loves you, they will try their very best to make things work. All relationships work two ways, it is your job to do what you can control and not force the other to give what they cannot.”

“I…I just want to let you know,” Luke sighed deeply, trying his best to get the words out, “I always thought your writing was wonderful,” Ben’s heart picked up at the compliment, not sure how to take his uncle’s words for face value, “a true joy to read. I am not trying to excuse myself,” the older man held his hand up before Ben could think about interrupting, “I simply want to say I made many, many mistakes concerning yourself and other students…but I failed you in every possible way and I can’t take that back.” Ben swallowed, his jaw locking in place as he witnessed Luke express himself straightforward for once, “But I just want to let you know I always thought you were beyond great and believed in your writing.”

Ben did not know how to respond. For years, he told himself he left writing for editing simply because he did not like it. Too much work. Too much baggage. He did not have the heart to experience rejection after rejection, and have his words collect dust. Instead, he’d rather be the person who gave the rejection or the approval of a piece, to compile a collective of work. Help those who wrote become better.

However, working with Rey the last couple of months, Ben grew to view writing differently. From a younger, fresher—open set of eyes. He began to write more on his own, not simply for therapeutic purposes, but with the intention to practice his craft. Though he did not share with a soul, not even Rey or Amylin, Ben began to write short stories again. Found himself dabbling in poetry, finding nuggets and gems for tales in his morning commutes and walks. His brain
remembered the age old pattern of writing mentally, and spewing out everything he thought the moment paper came in view. Writing on paper helped—separated Ben from his job and other work, because it was him, the pen, and the paper.

Despite years of denial, deep down Ben knew his passion belonged to writing. Forever, from the moment he discovered the power of words and stayed off to the side at recess as a kid to read instead of playing. When he’d only go out to people watch, forming stories of passersby’s in the safety of his mind.

The only reason he forsook his passion seemed to be the pain associated with the craft. His family—not just Luke, but Han and Leia too…maybe even Vader though Ben never knew it at the time. Bizarrely enough, no matter how frustrated Ben became with their personalities and actions, they were his constant inspiration. He loved his family no matter how much he wholeheartedly he disliked them.

Hearing Luke say those words…Ben did not know how to react. An inner boyhood idled with seeking acceptance rested heavy in his chest.

He could not reject the only offer of the only apology he might ever receive.

“Thank you,” was all he said, “I… guess I’ll see you on Thursday.”

Nodding jerkily, Ben strode out of the office without a formal goodbye. Not looking back once, he kept a steady pace in his gait as he exited the building. He walked until he reached the edge of campus and further out, past downtown. Time passed and he did not know how long nor far he traveled until his feet sloppily met sand.

Harsh, sharp wind ripped through the air, Ben frowning against the force. While growing up in the area, he’d never been a fan of the beach. The ocean, sure. Marine life was fascinating to observe, the lapping and rhythmic flow of the waves were calming.

Sand on the other hand was the enemy. The tiny grains were difficult to remove, getting anywhere and everywhere, even in the most uncomfortable of places. He disliked the sand, but adored the ocean.

The beach was empty, normal for a weekday afternoon in November. A few seagulls and flocks pattered about, minding their own business. Stepping closer to the waters, not caring his shoes were becoming muddied and infiltrated with sand, until he brushed against the tide.

A ragged scream emerged from his gut and out. Followed by another, then another…until his voice became hoarse and his body no longer had the energy to keep his standing.

“My goodness, is that young Benjamin Solo?” Maz Katana called out from across the room.

Halting by the entrance, Ben’s eyes fell upon the older, spectacled woman perched steadily on the stool behind the counter. Her bright, magnified eyes shone brightly at him, a clever grin gracing her lips. Rolling his shoulders, Ben did his best to relax under her presence. He’d been stunned to be noticed. Few locals stopped to greet him or make pleasant conversation during his walks.

Logically, Ben assumed it was due to his appearance. If someone were to place a side by side comparison of Ben at nineteen to how he looked now, they’d believe the men were two different
people. At least, this is what Ben thought while several friends argued his features were too distinct to miss while considering age and growth. Overall, a decade changed him both inwardly and outwardly—his build, his looks, his attitude…

Yet sharp eyed Maz Katana spotted him instantly with warm familiarity.

“Benjamin, I’ve heard you’ve traveled back to these parts,” she commented while rearranging a fresh bouquet of blush pink carnations. Curtsey of Chewie without a doubt.

Maz and Chewie were perpetually an item—‘dating’ a part of their routine. Flowers from the large, scruffy man were a weekly occurrence. Throughout the years, Ben accompanied his uncle on several occasions, the florist Mr. Yoda knowing the duo well.

“Only for a visit,” Ben corrected lightly, not wanting Maz to receive the wrong impression. “Nothing more, nothing less.”

She tutted in contradiction, hoping off her stool. “One always finds their home—”

“Now Maz,” Ben huffed, knowing the woman to give psychic-like advice. “Ahch-To isn’t my home.”

“Boy, I never said home was a place,” she informed him, her eyes staring him down knowingly.

Ben wisely chose to remain silent, allowing the woman to putter about the counter with little distraction from him.

“Have you seen the sea lions?” Maz asked, picking up a clean mug. She poured steaming coffee into the white porcelain.

“Yes, it was… enlightening,” he answered, feeling Maz observe him fondly.

“Good,” she said placing the mug in front of him, “they get lonely out there.”

Feeling regret pike in his chest, Ben accepted the coffee cheerfully—well his toned down version of cheerful. He sipped the liquid thoughtfully…if anyone were to give sound advice, Maz would be the only viable option.

“Maz,” Ben spoke up, the woman’s eyes zeroing in on him, “what would you do if someone you cared about…possibly lied to you on purpose?”

She hummed, setting her cleaning rag aside, “Do you know for a fact they lied?”

“No,” Ben gulped, “No, I don’t know…but someone—someone important might have alluded to someone else lying—”

“Well these someone’s sure sound important—maybe you should simply put your trust where it belongs,” Maz answered. Unprepared for the rather simple yet complex statement, Ben returned to his drink. “While we do want to believe in the worst, we must remember to understand who we know best.”

Her wrinkled hand patted his own larger one, a small smile of kindness given to him.

“Shit!”

The two jumped at the sound, the yelp coming from the stock room. A moment later, Rey entered the room, dripping wet in milk.
“I…may have experienced an accident,” Rey said sheepishly.

Maz and Ben glanced at each other before the older woman went marching after Rey.

“Leave girl, I’ll clean up this mess,” Maz called out, shuffling Rey along and out of the stock room doorway. “Why were you even back there?”

“I realized you were running low on milk out here—”

“Sometimes your help is a hindrance,” the older woman muttered, waving Rey off. Passing by the young woman, she handed her a rag, “Dry yourself off and let your boy walk you home.”

Following Maz’s orders, Rey blotted at the milk stain down the front of her shirt. Slowly she made her way back to Ben, he wincing at the mess she made.

“Ugh, I’m going to freezing,” she grumbled, finding her shirt to still be uncomfortably damp.

“I—hold on a moment,” Ben told her, shrugging off his jacket. Swiftly, he pulled his grey sweater over his head, his white under shirt slightly ridding up. He held the garment to her in offering. “Go ahead and change into this,” Before she could protest, he quickly interjected, “I have my jacket, I’ll be fine.”

Nodding gratefully with a small blushing smile, Rey took the sweater from him and went to the restroom to change her shirt.

“You two are awfully cozy,” Maz remarked popping her head back out once Rey left the room. “She mentioned you were her friend ages ago, but I have a feeling it is something more.”

“It’s something more,” Ben answered honestly, “we are trying to take our time. The distance is rough, but we make it work.”

He wasn’t too sure if he was telling Maz the facts or simply attempting to reassure himself.

She nodded, turning back into the stock room. “Are you sure long distance is the best option?”

Ben frowned, pulling on his jacket, “Maz, its not like someone goes out of their way and decides ‘hey, I want a long distance relationship.’ Its not an active choice.”

“It is an active choice when one of you has the option to stay with the other,” the older woman called out.

Ben’s face hardened, knowing Maz must have been referring to him.

“She’s a smart girl,” the wise woman noted, walking over to mop sink tucked into the corner of the work area. “But ambitious with her own aspirations. I care for you boy, like family, but she will not be a lovesick girl forever.”

Ben kicked his foot on air.

“Maz, I know what you are trying to say,” he huffed, “I can’t just drop everything and come back here.”

“What do you have to drop, hm?” She continued to work, wringing the soaked rag at the sink. “Your grandfather’s literary journal is gone, you are trying to make your own, but your heart is not invested,” Ben felt a prickling awareness at her words, “and you have no one there. Young Solo, you don’t know where you belong.”
“I’m trying—”

“Trying,” Maz shook her head, “trying is nothing when the outcome does not change.”

The creak of the restroom door altered Ben and Maz. Rey emerged from behind, coming up to the two with a content smile. Ben’s sweater absolutely drowning her frame and sleeves dangling past her hands. The sight caused his heart rate to pick up, the desire to hold her in his embrace forever increasing.

“Are you ready to go?” Ben asked, his voice cracking.

If Rey noticed, she didn’t comment. “Sure, just need to grab my backpack, and find a bag for my shirt.”

She went over to the other side of the counter to grab her belongings, Maz shooting Ben a stern look over the girl’s shoulder.

Maybe Maz had a point…or maybe she didn’t.

However, Ben found himself unable to shake off the growing fear of Rey would eventually leave.

The two walked side by side, the street lights illuminating the path. A faint crash of waves and howl of the wind echoed in the distance, mild bay mist setting in for the night. Surprisingly the two kept pace with one another, Ben shortening his strides while Rey maintained hers to not seem too eager.

Patiently, she waited a few moments to see if Ben would initiate a handhold.

He, of course, did not notice. Undeniably, he’d been enraptured by his own mind. Gaze soft, not completely in-taking his surroundings but merely living amongst unaffected.

Silently, she considered his profile. While not intensely sharp, his features gave a soft almost nostalgic air…nearly untouched by time. She restrained from tracing a finger delicately over the lines and shadows of his face, connect the constellations of his marks to see if he truly existed.

Sometimes, in moments of quiet and partnership, Rey wondered why Ben liked her. Why…Why a random girl from too many places to remember…who could not remember the faces of her past no matter how earnestly she tried. When he came from people who cared deeply for him, and wanted the best even if it meant no longer being in his life. She was rough and rude when she tried not to be. She spoke her mind and already hurt him more than once…yet he liked her. Liked to spend his days by her side.

Yes, she knew he loved her. He told her so much on several occasions and she the same.

However, liking someone was different.

A person can love someone with all their heart, but still not like them, their choices, their actions.

Rey realized she loved Ben, but sometimes she wasn’t too sure she liked him.

No longer waiting, Rey reached for his hand. Their fingers intertwined on instinct, Ben giving a light squeeze. She simple held, not squeezing back.
“Hello Rachel,” he cooed, “did you miss your Grandad?”

Her arms reached for him, fingers trying to grasp him with their poor function. He chuckled lightly, doing her a favor and picking her up.

“Rey, this is my friend Annie,” He nodded to other man with him, a bit younger than her Grandad and a bit taller. His eyes were blue too…

The other man held out a tan teddy bear towards her, goggles and pilots cap graced its head.

She happily snatched the bear, crushing the plushy into her chest.

“She can call the bear ‘Annie’,” Her Grandad declared delightfully patting the other man on the shoulder joyfully.

“Ben, she cannot call the bear ‘Annie’. She should call the bear Benny, or Benji. After her grandfather, the great Ben Ke—”

Slowly the scene melted away—first her mother, then the world and room surrounding, followed by his grandad’s friend.

In the misty haze of the once warm room stood only her grandad, looking upon her with sad, tired eyes.

“Rachel I wish I could see you more, but I don’t think your mother would like that…she seems to have gone back to her old ways…” he mused quietly. Gently, he pressed a feather kiss to the crown of Rey’s head. “My dear, I hope one day we can see each other in better instances…”

And finally he faded, leaving Rey seemingly alone in her dream…

.
.
.
A child’s faint crying from an unknow corner echoed off invisible walls. Following the wails, Rey
stumbled in the dark until she found a young boy sitting on the floor. His knees were tucked tightly to his chest, as wracked sobs hiccupped through his tiny body. Confused, Rey crouched down beside him—

An immediate buzz of yelling infiltrated her ears once she reached his level.

“We can’t handle him—he has issues, you know he does.”

“He’s just a boy, they all go through phases. Maybe this is his anger phase.”

“Why can’t he be like other children—”

Reaching a hesitant hand, Rey touched the boy’s shoulder—he became a man instantly.

He became Ben. Stunned she felt herself stumble back into nothing but a groundless floor, her feet running on nothing.

Spinning back around, she was standing in a living room. Pale blue, white willowy curtains rippled in the nonexistent wind. Empty.

Frowning, Rey glanced behind her—another young child stood before her. A girl with dark curly locks and bright hazel eyes.

Rey felt she knew the child…but not in reality.

“Your my daughter—but I don’t have a daughter,” she mumbled. The girl stepped forward, Rey taking a step back. The pattern continued, a paralyzing effect set in her chest—

She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t—

Rey’s eyes shot open, she gulping for air.

Colors danced in her vision as she struggled to see clearly in the dark room. Blinking rapidly, she steadied her breath. Breathing in then out, she gradually released her tight grip on her blanket. The fabric was damp with sweat from her palms. Wiping her hands down, she turned over to her side, facing Ben.

He remained asleep, unaffected by her.

One of his arms was draped carelessly over his head, his body the most relaxed Rey had ever seen in their time together. For most of the night, he’d been lost in his own thoughts, responding with muted syllables. While missing him for parts of the day, Rey did not object to the change in their impromptu routine. She was perfectly content to simply be in the same room as him.

Thankfully, Mitaka and Finn decided to be a tag team at dinner that night and made a tater-tot casserole. No one had been quite sure what was in the casserole, the dish having a spicy kick and neither one would tell them what type of meat was used. Rey thought it better to drop the questions because she wasn’t too sure if she’d like the answer. Ben didn’t talk much during dinner, preferring to chew thoughtfully, staring intently at an invisible point.

While wondering what preoccupied his thoughts, Rey decided to let the matter rest for now. Ben would talk to her when he was ready…hopefully.

Shifting a bit to gather closer to him, Rey tried not to let her mind dwell too long on her dream. All she remembered was small flashes of fleeting images. Annie, Ben, a child, and her ‘daughter’. She
remembered feeling she had a daughter...yet an extreme disconnect. All the images, she felt a embedded longing and fulfillment mixing within her hollowness of her chest.

What she saw...she want all of it. However, she wanted none of it. Her friends joked about the possibility of Ben marrying her because he'd never truly been in a romantic relationship with anyone else. While the thought appealed to her romantic beliefs...picturing herself with someone forever seemed daunting. Imagining a family was intangible.

Tucking her arm under her pillow, Rey's hand bumped a hard surface. Grasping the item, she slipped her arm out from under the pillow. She found a leather bound, navy blue journal—the very same one she found Ben's nose tucked into for the last couple of days.

While she understood his privacy, Rey also knew the entries in the journal were troubling Ben.

Face scrunching together, blindly she reached for her glasses she tucked an awkward distance away on her bookshelf. Usually, she'd rest her glasses on her desk which was closest to her bed, yet Ben seemed to have claimed as his side of the bed. Her fingers reached far enough to brush against her glasses and grab them. Slipping the frames on, Rey hunched to her side. Purposely out of Ben's immediate eye view. He'd get peevish and flustered if she brought up the journal, or pretend it didn't existed. To resolve this issues, Rey decided she needed to face it for herself.

Unwinding the leather strap, Rey cracked open the journal to the first page available.

May 12th 1996

My dear friend Benjamin has finally experienced the greatest joys—becoming a grandfather. While I lost the privilege to see my grandson during his toddler years, I hope Old Ben will be able to see young Rachel grow into her own. He invited myself and Ahsoka to meet the child; Winter has came back into their care. Or rather has maintained contact for a little over six months and plans to remain in the area for Ben and Satine to help with the baby as James has become busy with work. She's a sweet child, mild in nature with greatly curious and wise hazel eyes.

Turing the page, a picture fell out from between the parchment, landing on her chest. Picking up the photograph, Rey lifted it higher for more light. A chubby cheeked baby smiled happily back, mid-gurgle. Her chestnut hair defied gravity, sticking up straight and out, reminding Rey of a troll doll. Her bright hazel eyes gleamed back, filled with true innocence of a newborn. A cozy pink blanket was tucked under her arm, tiny pudgy hands grasping with ill motor skills.

Rey's eyes caught the neat penmanship on the bottom of the photo.

Rachel Kenobi Jacobs, born May 9th 1996 to Winter & James Jacobs.

Our Little Rey of Sunshine

Fingers trembling, the journal fell from her grasp. Numbness Shakily covering her hand over her mouth, Rey fought the truth. She recognized the names, no matter how much she wanted to deny their existence.

Because acknowledging their existence meant she needed to acknowledge all aspects of their existence.

She wasn’t ready to do that. Frighteningly, she might not ever be ready to face a past she could not remember.
Emotionlessly, she shut the journal closed along with the photo. She painstakingly coiled the leather strap around the cover and slipped the journal underneath the bed.

Wide awake and mind reeling, Rey glanced at the sleeping man beside her. Chest constricting sharply, an agonizing realization struck—Ben knew.

Ben—her confidant, best friend, and mentor—knew about her past. Her family. Her desire to know, to simply understand why she wasn’t wanted. Why she was forced to be alone. Why her.

Yet he never said anything.

Sitting up numbly, she climbed out of bed.

For the first time in her life, Rey chose to be alone.

Chapter End Notes

Well....that was an emotional rollercoaster.

Remember--there are two blue journals ;)

And you can look up the meaning of Rey's dreams (a warped memory, children, an empty room, not being able to breathe, and running in place) to kind of figure out what it all means. Because I will say this, when you dream of having children it actually most of the time has nothing to do with having child. So don't get your hopes up about that.

Vent in the comments, and I might be able to give reassurances ;)

Love you, bye <3
“Well this is a nice surprise,” Ben remarked, picking up his cup of coffee. 

Leia smiled at her son, stirring cream into her own mug. “Just because we are in Ahch-To and not in Brooklyn does not mean we are not going to celebrate your birthday.”

Not entirely pleased by the intrusion, Ben smile tightly. After all, Leia was his mother and she tried her best to make everything appear normal when circumstances were far from. Such as the fact, she deftly avoided the topic of her father.

Instead, she resorted to showering him with food and motherly affection to make up for the fact.

At eight in the morning, Leia had unceremoniously invited herself over to Rey and Finn’s apartment with a box of doughnuts in hand.

“But it’s also Thanksgiving,” Ben reminded her, “Figured everyone would conveniently forget.”

“Just because you want everyone to forget, doesn’t mean they will,” Leia stated matter-of-factly, “You are no Molly Ringwald, Ben.”

“Nor do I desire to be,” he supported, holding his coffee close to himself. Growing up, his parents made sure Ben’s birthday was never forgotten despite other major events being swept under the rug. Such as his first soccer game, receiving his fifth grade math medal, or his eighth grade art show. Birthdays were special and were to be remembered because he made it through another year. It was something worth celebrating.

“I’m surprised Rey’s not here,” Leia glanced around the room, as though expecting the young woman to pop out of a corner.

Ben grimaced, focusing intensely on his mug. “Ah—she doesn’t really know today is my
birthday,” his mother’s eyes widen, her lips twisting in a disapproving purse, “I mean, I figured I must have told her at some point——”

“You never told your girlfriend your birthday,” Leia scowled,” All you Solo men are the same.” She shook her head, making direct eye contact with her son. Ben was sure he felt his soul leave his body; his mother could be terrifying when she wanted to be. “Your father did the same thing.”

“Well, it never came up, and she’s been kind of strange lately,” Ben admitted unsurely. While in the past he told Leia everything—well as much as he could without hindering his own mental sanity—now he was not too sure what to share. His concerns were not only for himself, but also Rey. He did not know if it’d be a breach in privacy with his partner to be discussing their relationship with his mother. However, Leia loved them both dearly; she’d want the best, that much Ben was sure. “

“‘Strange’ how?”

“Just…strange.”

Wednesday was odd, to say the least.

Ben woke to an empty bed; a cold feeling. Over the last few days, and during her visit, Ben became accustom to waking up with her sprawled next to him, or on top of him—not completely gone. He got up from the bed, shuffled through the hall, and found her sleeping in the living room. Curled awkwardly on her side without a blanket, her back was turned to him.

At the time, he tried not to think too much on the occurrence. Instead, he tucked a nearby throw blanket over her. He’d let Rey be while he made the coffee and chatted with Finn and Mitaka. The two newfound buddies were planning on spending Thanksgiving with Rose and other mutual friends of the couple further up north, the three deciding to make it a mini road trip.

Finn, of course, made sure to mention how Ben and Rey would have the entire apartment to themselves for a few days and to make good use of time.

Ears burning red and a jaw locked, Ben did not ask of their plans for the remainder of the morning.

Meanwhile, Rey continued to be distant for the entirety of the day. She left the apartment while he’d been in the shower, leaving a note on the kitchen counter for him.

Going on a run around town. Will be back in couple of hours.

~Rey

With his newly acquired free time, Ben decided to focus on writing.

Something about returning to Ahch-To brought his creativity out. Making camp at the small dining table, Ben wrote in his notebook—outlining, jotting ideas and tidbits of research until he slowly began to form a clear vision of what he wanted to write.

Though premature, Ben desperately desired Rey’s input—yet was gone longer than expected. Her run turned into needing to accomplish a few errands before the holiday, to catching up with a classmate over a future assignment. To eventually texting she’d be coming back late.

And she did. Around eleven at night. Rey proceeded to get ready for bed and went to sleep without so much as a goodnight.
She didn’t even force him to be the little spoon—which she had done at some point every night, until the previous night.

Ben did not know what happened, but Rey was avoiding him.

He firmly believed this conclusion as she once again went running out the door for groceries, claiming she’d be back before noon.

“Maybe…I don’t know—Talk to her!” Leia stressed, whacking her son on the shoulder. “Talking to someone does wonders, Ben.”

He winced, flinching away at her exclamation.

“No, the last time we tried to talk something out, we said some pretty harsh things and she ended up leaving.”

Okay… she was planning on leaving anyways. Her flight was scheduled only about ten hours later, but the fact of the matter was they did not part on good terms. He did not want a repeat, especially when his own visit was coming to a close.

“Ben,” his mother said his name gently, grasping his larger, steady hand in her own smaller, wrinkling palm. “You do understand arguments are normal—healthy, for a relationship. If you don’t argue or discuss anything of importance, you two aren’t communicating.”

“We communicate just fine,” Ben defended, his free hand gripping his mug tighter. “Yelling and shouting doesn’t solve anything, just look at you and dad.”

“Your father and I were yelling past each other to see who’s voice could carry the longest,” Leia stated sagely, Ben finding an odd mix of fondness and bitterness in her tone. Staring at his mother now, caring yet stern, still swooning over her ex-husband…Ben decided he many never comprehend the dynamics of his parent’s relationship.

Maybe that’s what made it so special.

“When…when Rey and I argue, its not pretty, mom,” he said. Letting go of her hand, Ben removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes, tiredly. “We…we know how to push each other’s buttons just right and end up hurting each other more than intended and…” He put his glasses back on, dropping his hands on his lap, easing into a slouch. “It’s fire and ice.”

“Son, I know you are trying, but haven’t you ever thought how Rey’s doing with all of this?”

Ben blinked back, unsure of what point his mother was attempting to make.

Huffing, Leia grabbed a doughnut and took a vicious bite. Chewing, she motioned for Ben to talk.

“I guess…”

He honestly did not know how Rey was doing, or what was on her mind. For being in close proximity, Ben felt a distance from her. They’d both been in their own head spaces.

Caught up in Vader’s journals and his own family dynamics, Ben never realized he was not focusing on Rey…and when he did have the opportunity to spend time with her, she’d been busy. Involved in her own work and routine he boldly planted himself into with little warning.

Ben decided he was not only an awful communicator with anxiety and anger issues, but a pretty
“dense boyfriend as a cherry on top.

“I… I need to talk with her.”

“No shit.”

Typing away on her keys, Rey felt Ben’s gaze on her.

He’d been watching her steadily for most of mid-morning.

When she came back from the grocery store, she’d been surprised to see Leia and Ben talking pleasantly to each other at the dining table. His mother quickly excused herself, claiming she needed to help Chewie with Thanksgiving dinner, stressing that she better see them on her doorstep by five o’clock, and to see if Maz could make a cake on short notice.

Ben noticeably grimaced at both remarks.

The rest of the morning went by silently, Rey and Ben putting the groceries away with little trouble before going off to their own corners of the room. Rey sat at the kitchen counter, reading through the journalism courses available at her university, while Ben returned to the dining table that slowly became his work space during his stay.

Ever since she spoke with Mara about becoming a columnist for the university newspaper, Rey could not help but feel maybe there was something more for her in journalism. While she enjoyed writing, and expressing herself creatively through the art… she wasn’t a fan of writing fiction nor poetry. Reading, comprehending, and analyzing literature—she could go on for days. Nothing would ever change such an integral part of her; stories were her escape from her reality, one she longed to surge above.

Though it was no secret she excelled in non-fiction, not only Ben, but her peers and professors acknowledging her skills laid within the realms of a reality, truth, and human nature. Journalism and non-fiction were not the same, but maybe she’d find a happy medium.

She liked the idea of a happy medium.

Telling Ben on the other hand… Rey wasn’t too sure how to explain she might be changing career paths. If she could even call it that; ‘vague ideas of a career’ seemed to be the better phrasing. Especially when he was her mentor on writing.

Talking to Ben seemed to be a struggle within itself—she refrained from bring up her findings in the journal, however she desperately desired to wring his neck, cry, and hug him simultaneously.

Livid was only the cusp of her emotions—anger, frustration, pain… Yet she still loved him (one of the few thoughts capable of bringing her back down from an emotional high), and knew he must have been planning on telling her at some point.

Right?

There needed to be a logical explanation for this situation.

One thing Rey learned from their friendship, and subsequently their relationship—Ben did not know how to keep anything from her for any longer than a day, possibly two. His brain either ran
on broody, emotionally distraught writer, or actual human puppy, who could be super hyper when excited and thought his baby bark was a growl.

She knew far more information than needed on several matters. How his regular coffee shop brought back his favorite roast—she was the first he text with the good news. When Trixie learned a new trick, when Hux was being a particular arse, when his grandfather turned out to be his mentor—Rey knew in less than twenty-four hours for each of these events, and many more.

If she did the math right, he must have known for at least a day and a half. Even if he did not realize the baby in the photo was her, he must have recognized the name. Yes, Rachel Jacobs was a common, but he must have known. The birthdate and the parents name were the same. The combination of James and Winter together, while alone would cause many inklings, should have caused a red flag for Ben.

Squeezing her eyes shut, Rey wearily at her reflection through the laptop screen.

They needed to talk.

Standing up from the barstool, she inhaled deeply before walking straight to Ben.

“Hey,” Rey said, louder than anticipated.

Ben lifted his gaze from his strewed papers to her.

Both looked at each other apprehensively.

Clearing her throat, Rey sat down in the chair beside Ben. Clasping and unclasping her hands, Rey opted to simply lay them flat on the table.

“I think—”

“I have to admit something—”

She blinked widely, “Oh, uh, then go right ahead.”

Ben took a large breath then exhaled, sagging a bit in his chair. Rather comical considering the massive size of his frame, but worrisome by the intensity of his eyes. “I….” A wave of panic increased in his irises as he faced her fully. “I—I—It’s my birthday,” he blurted out. With a resigning sigh, he repeated, “It’s my birthday.”

What?

“Oh,” Rey stated dumbly, “I didn’t know—actually I never knew.”

Leaning back in the chair, Ben played with his pen idly. “I don’t like celebrating it, especially since it occasionally lands on Thanksgiving. Causes more ruckus than necessary.”

“Like this year,” She said, processing the news. “Not causing a ruckus, but the whole landing on a holiday.”

“Yup,” he popped the ‘p’, chewing hard on his lips after. Another thing to add to the list—she wondered in these moments how well she and Ben truly knew each other. We’re they diving into things too fast, especially when they factored in the long distance?

“Okay…” Rey spoke slowly, standing up from her chair, “then happy birthday.” She smiled tightly, turning to go retrieve her laptop. “I’m going to go ahead and start getting ready for this
evening.”

Ben nodded back, hunching in on himself once more. Something else was bothering him, and it wasn’t his birthday.

“You’re acting weird,” Ben muttered as they waited for the door to open.

Beside him, Rey shot him an admonished look, fidgeting with her burgundy blouse. She dressed relatively nice for Thanksgiving dinner, a billowy blouse tucked into a nice pair of black jeans. For once in her life, she donned heels—well, boots, but heeled ankle boots. She looked…older. More refined than her usual messy buns, band t-shirts, and worn-down converse.

“I’m not acting weird. You’re acting weird,” she stated clearly, her gaze focused on the newly repainted door.

Growing up, the front door to the family house had been a notoriously bright blue. Which wasn’t completely uncommon in a coastal town, though a bit of an oddity for houses closer to the inland than the bay.

Now, years later, the door was a light grey along with the rest of the trimmings.

Ben wasn’t too sure what to make of the change.

“I know I’m acting weird, bit I want to know why you are acting weird,” he countered back.

“Can we please stop saying the word ‘weird’?” Rey groaned, “Its starting to not sound like a word anymore.”

The door swung open, the two whipping their heads to the brush of air.

Luke Skywalker stood on the other side, beard trimmed and hair not-quiet as grey. He must have dyed his aging locks.

Rey and Ben tensed at the sight of him, though for distinctly different reasons.

“Oh, we were wondering when you two would show up,” the older man greeted, swinging the door wider for the couple.

Nodding to Luke, Ben brushed past him briskly into the house.

Outside, Rey and Luke regarded each other cautiously. The professor seemed the least affected by her appearance.

“Rey.”

“Dr. Skywalker.”

“Please call me Luke,” he stated earnestly, “We’re basically family.”

“Did you and Ben talk?”

“He didn’t tell you?” Luke seemed stunned by this revelation, almost as much as Rey. “He came to my office the other day—”
“He what?” Rey felt herself on the verge of panic, “What—what do you mean—he hasn’t—"

“Don’t worry, I didn’t say anything more than you being a former student,” Luke shrugged off, attempting to soothe her woes.

She rolled her eyes, “Technically as current student.”

“Anyways, we talked. Not everything is great, but civil. I’d be a fool to ask for more,” Luke spoke wisely, content with his and Ben’s relationship. “He’s…different.”

“I told you,” Rey declared, chin jutted out. “He’s not some frail, emotional kid.”

“Maybe I should have listened,” Luke coincided with his hands up. He clasped them together tightly. “Talking to him…it was eye opening. That maybe I was wrong, not about him, but maybe about you.”

“I don’t want a half-arsed apology,” she said, standing tall.

Squinting, Luke’s eyes pierced into her, “Rey—what do you want? To be in the class again?”

“Oh, god no. It was awful being in there,” she grumbled, unafraid of offending Luke at this point. While she wasn’t entirely happy over how the events leading up to her removal from class transpired, Rey enjoyed the smaller, one-on-one feedback. Classrooms were imposing and group workshops daunting.

“Then how am I supposed to help you?” Despite his exhausted tone, more so from life than anything else, a sliver of hope sparked in his eyes.


“I beg your pardon?” Rey remarked, baffled by the suggestion. “You don’t have the right to make such—"

Luke quickly intercepted the conversation, stepping closer to her, “Don’t get me wrong—I am proud of the strives my nephew has made, but…he’s not ready for a real relationship.”

“It’s not your judgement to make,” Rey said, squaring her shoulders as her eyes sharpened on Luke.

“I understand that, but you need to really think about this—Ben comes with a lot of baggage.”

“I know what I am getting myself into,” she interjected stoutly, “Ben and I were friends before anything; I know he comes with his eccentrics and issues.”

“Yes, friends on the internet, but I don’t think this is going to go the way you think,” he warned ominously.

“And how do you know what I think?”

“I don’t,” he admitted willingly, “Not at all…but I know pursuing a relationship right now may be detrimental to both of you,” Luke’s eyebrows rose worryingly, his words coming out frantically rather than his usual careless drawl, “I think you two might have very different ideas of what you want from the other—how you see the other—”
“I am done with this conversation,” Rey stepped around Luke, entering the house.

“I was about to send Chewie over to pick you two up,” Leia announced as Ben entered the kitchen. His mother wasn’t doing much of the cooking, not the best around the stove. However she assisted Chewie with stirring and placing dishes in the oven.

“Ah, no need. Just took us a while to get ready,” Ben answered.

From the stove, his large, hairy Uncle Chewie turned around. Chewie was a who seemed to transcend time, not quite aging as noticeably as the rest of his family and friends. Ben recalled childhood memories of swinging on Uncle Chewie’s arms like a monkey and curling into him as he were a massive teddy bear. He expected Chewie to ignore him; over the last ten years, he did not keep in contact with the man, and Uncle Chewie was undeniably loyal to Ben’s father.

Instead, the hulking man set his spoon aside and strode over to Ben. With one great motion, he was lifted and wrapped snuggly in his uncle’s arms.

Tensing for a moment, Ben soon gave into the comfort. Chewie’s hugs were a trademark of home—loved and cared for no matter the circumstances.

“Hey Big Guy,” Ben muttered into his uncle’s shoulder.

Chewie grunted, before letting Ben go, trudging back to the stove.

Ben smiled at him.

“Well, now that you are here, please help Chewie finish the food. God knows I have been zero help to the poor guy.” Leia shuffled past Ben and Chewie, patting both on the shoulder. “I need to see how your father is doing—”

“What’s wrong with dad?” Ben asked, shrugging off his jacket, and setting it on a kitchen stool.

Leia frowned, before a soft chuckle left her, amused by her son’s sudden concern, “Oh, nothing major. He couldn’t find his blood pressure pills; I told him they were in the medicine cabinet. But knowing him, he glanced in there and didn’t really look.” She shook her head fondly, leaving the room with a purposeful strides.

“Oh,” Ben breathed, before facing Chewie, “What needs to get done?” He asked, rolling up his sleeves. The kitchen counter was filled with half full and mixed bowls as well as a large block of cheese and drained pasta sitting idle by the sink. A few dishes seemed to be done—the mashed potatoes, stuffing, and turkey. Mild chaos, but manageable when put in the right hands.

“Everything.”

“Damn it.”

“Rey!” Leia called out, noticing the young woman standing precariously in the half decorated living room. The older woman wrapped Rey in a firm hug, letting go with a sure squeeze. “I am so glad you decided to join us.”
“Of course,” Rey said, hoping she didn’t sound off. Her mind was preoccupied by Luke’s accusations. “I am happy to be here.”

“Ben is already helping out Chewie in the kitchen, you can join them, or I know Han was trying to get the TV connected—” Leia waved to where the newer television set sat in the living room, “I finally convinced him to upgrade, his old box screen could not even reach public access cable anymore. He’s just dragging his feet about it now.”

Her eyes trailed the wires and cable cords. She was restless and tinkering helped soothed her nerves…

“I can set up the television,” Rey set her purse down on the nearest arm chair, moving towards the partially boxed screen and styrofoam mess.

“Are you sure?” Leia asked, “I was just going to say wait for Han—”

“He’ll never get it done at this point,” she sighed in mirthful exasperation, “Don’t worry, I got it. Plus, I like to keep my hands busy.”

“Alright,” Leia agreed. Gently pressing her hand to Rey’s arm, she smiled warmly up at the girl. “But honestly, I am happy you are here. I never thought I’d see the day all my boys were under the same roof, and it’s all thanks to you.” Eyes watering, Leia chuckled away her tears, wiping at the corner of her eyes. “Just know you are always family here—always.”

Rey watched Leia head up the stairs, ignoring the prickling behind her own eyes at the woman’s tender words. The words family happened to be thrown around quite a bit in the last half hour; Rey had never been welcomed into a fold with immediateness. Besides Finn, Rey did not understand the full encompassing care within unconditional love. While Luke was, well Luke—dickish, prudish, a pretentious jerk, with black and white morals—he genuinely appeared concerned for her, however mislead his thoughts. His twin was of the same cloth; caring and welcoming, her eyes lighting up without needing to utter a word.

Ben received the remarkable quality, Rey was simply failing to pay attention.

Clearing her throat, she crouched down in search of the instructions. Knowing Han, he probably threw them out and she was to be left to her own devices.

Nothing new for the girl who made her own blueprints to life.

“Okay, I know for a fact you take your pills like clockwork, what’s the problem?” Leia asked, leaning against the doorway of her and Han’s room.

In the corner of the room, Han sat in the armchair, that morning’s newspaper lying out on his lap.

“Now Leia—”

“Don’t ‘now Leia’ me,” she warned, stepping into the room. Closing the door soundly behind her, she made her way over to the edge of the bed.

The room went through some renovations over the years, after all Han was left to his own décor expertise for a better part of ten years, but was finally finding some stable ground. New sheets and drapes did wonders. It would never resemble the room they had before the divorce.
She believed it better off that way.

Han rubbed at his jaw with the meat of his palm, avoiding eye contact with his ex-wife. “The boy and I…we talked a little, though not much. What am I supposed to say? My son and kid I see as a daughter are somehow in a relationship.” He shrugged, not entirely competent in summing up his emotions.

She’s always been apt at dissecting the ethos of it all, speaking with purpose, while Han was well skilled in the action itself. Empathy was a Solo trait, despite Han and Ben protesting separately they were not softies at heart.

“I don’t know…maybe be with everyone downstairs?” she suggested.

A gruff chuckle escaped Han, adjusting his reading glasses higher on his nose. “No—you and I both know this is gonna be a shitshow. Hell, I haven’t seen Luke in ages and we live in the same town!” Folding his newspaper away, he eyed Leia openly. “All of us here…I have a bad feeling about this.”

“Don’t think like that,” Leia rubbed her hands together, pursing her lips in displeasure, “This can be a new beginning.”

“Or a sour ending,” he countered. “Listen Princess, I am glad our boy is back…but I think it might be too good to be true. For him to be back for good.”

He had a point. A few years had passed before Leia found herself back in regular contact with Ben since his departure.

“Han,” she stated sternly, “We got to have hope.”

“I think you have enough for the both of us.”

——

Adding the last of the bread crumbs to the macaroni and cheese, Ben set out to put the last dish into the oven. Chewie had most of the food prepped and under way but needed a knowledgeable extra set of hands.

From his back pocket, Ben felt his phone vibrate. Setting the oven mitts down, he picked up his phone, frowning at the caller ID.

Swiping his phone, Ben answered, “Hey, what’s up?”

“We have a development on Kenobi,” Cassian stated, Ben perking up at the mention of the phantom man. Glancing over his shoulder, he stepped out of the kitchen and into the dinning room. Plates were already set, along with a few glasses and utensils to the side. The task abandoned by something apparently more pressing.

“Okay, shoot,” he said the moment he was alone.

“He’s alive—lives in a remote cottage in Scotland, I’ll forward you the address,” Cassian informed him.

Feeling weight lifting off his shoulders at this news, a relieved chuckle escaped him. His grin grew uncontrollably, Ben hiding part of his elation behind his hand.
“That’s—that amazing. When can we get in contact with him?”

“That’s our problem; he doesn’t want to get in contact with anyone but his granddaughter,” his friend muttered, exasperated. “All we know is her name is Rachel K. Jacobs…well at least from his word, she goes by a nickname—It’s like ‘Ray’, but spelled—”

“With an ‘e’?” Ben found himself asking, all the air stilling in his lungs.

“Yeah—wait isn’t your girlfrie—”

“I got to go; send me the rest of the details later,” Ben ended the phone call, knowing Cassian would follow through as he always does. He’d definitely ask questions later, not able to take a cut off conversation lightly.

Rey…Rey’s birthname was Rachel Jacobs. She went by a nickname for nearly all her life, an odd way of spelling, one not many would think of as an option. He remember her mother had a season for a name, but he couldn’t exactly pinpoint which in his mind—but her father’s name was James. He knew that for a fact because she mentioned how she considered ‘James’ as a possible middle name for herself in her essay.

Could…could Rey’s mother be Winter? The girl who’d been adopted by the Kenobi’s, the constant runaway with a stubborn streak?

Did ‘K’…Did ‘K’ in this granddaughter’s name possibly stand for Kenobi? Ben could not remember if ‘K’ was in Rey’s birth name or not…

Yet his gut was telling him these connects, these absolutely truly absurd connects weren’t a coincidence.

A coincidence was meeting Rey on the internet.
Everything else—their friends and family, her name…this could not be a coincidence.

A strange twist of fate incomprehensible.

Peeking out into the archway of the living room, he spotted Rey. She was sitting on the couch, leaning forward as she pressed random buttons on the television remote. The screen remained blue as she switched channels, a little grunt of aggravation leaving her as she tossed the remote aside to assess the problem hands on.

His grandfather’s writings came back to him, hauntingly…

Winter…was an enigma. Her sharp hazel eyes spoke more truth than her words, and her slender form made her appear tomboyish, yet she embraced her womanly attributes with class. While cold in demeanor herself, her smile dazzled even the most freezing of hearts.

Rey popped out from behind the television, noticing Ben watching her. Hesitantly, she smiled at him—bright even when she wasn’t her best self…

One might even say dazzling.

“Hey kid,” Luke greeted, entering the dinning room. He began picking up where the utensils where they’d been left behind. His uncle considered him for a moment, his blue eyes widening a fraction in concern. “Are you okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”
His gaze left Rey’s as she turned back to her work, focusing on his uncle.

“Mom…mom mentioned you knew Benjamin Kenobi. He was a mentor of sorts to you,” Ben chose his next words carefully, needing his uncle to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, “Did you ever meet his daughter, Winter Kenobi?”

Puzzled by the question, Luke set aside his work once more. Instead, he pulled out one of the chairs to gradually sit himself down, “I haven’t heard that name in decades—Winter Kenobi,” he chewed on the name, a nostalgic twinkle in his eye, “A force to be reckoned with that woman.”

“So…” Ben sat down opposite Luke, hoping to not appear to eager at this new information. “Did you know her?”

“Personally, no,” disappointment rooted itself in Ben’s gut, “But I did cross paths with her a few times when she was still in contact with Old Ben—they always had a rocky relationship,” Luke stated solemnly, “he tried forever to make things well between the two, but she had this unwavering hope about her birth parents finding her again. It honestly, repeatedly, crushed Ben’s spirit.”

“That’s…” Ben swallowed, his mind drifting to Rey’s own account of her parents; how she realized they many never come back, especially when no one alive in her family wanted to connect with her. “that’s heartbreaking.”

“Seeing tired, good people fighting to keep their families together is always heartbreaking, Ben.”

The implication did not go unnoticed between the two men.

Luke stroked his beard thoughtfully, “What brought this on—how do you even know about Winter? Hardly anyone does.”

Sitting back against the chair, Ben’s gaze dropped away from Luke’s. Licking his lips, Ben decided if things were to progress in a better direction with his uncle, he need to be honest, “I’ve been reading Grandfather’s journals.”

Silence weighed heavy in the room, neither nephew or uncle moving.

“You’re what?” Luke exclaimed, his jaw working to speak words that were failing to come out. Uneasiness rested on Ben’s shoulders, he subconsciously hunching in on himself. “How did you even get ahold of them?”

“Ahsoka—”

Luke grumbled under his breath, shaking his head. “You have no right to read his journals! It’s an invasion of privacy.”

“For a man who is already dead!” Ben defended, surging forward in his seat to face Luke head on. “And they were given to me—”

“First you shut down his company and now you decided to read his inner most thoughts?” Luke countered over his nephew’s defensive arguments. “What the hell is wrong with you Ben?”

“What the hell is wrong with you for keeping all this from me!” Ben bellowed back, standing up. Luke soon followed after, the two men standing off.

Feet were rushing down the stairs to the room, though both men ignored it, unable to help but
argue over the matter of Anakin Vader.

“It wasn’t my decision; your mother and father made that choice. I argued for you to meet him.”

“I never even got to truly meet him, I knew him from a distance—why the fuck did no one tell me about that? How I was working for him all this time?” Ben asked, feeling hot tears stinging his eyes.

“Because you weren’t talking to us,” Luke explained, catching his breath over his anger, “The only person you’d even bother letting know your whereabouts was your mother, and we were terrified you’d cease all contact if you knew the truth.”

Ben shut his mouth, unprepared for the retaliation. He…he didn’t know that. Honestly, how his father and uncles felt never crossed Ben’s mind. He merely assumed they were glad to have him out of their lives, to not be bothered by his ticking time bomb tendencies.

“Why the hell do you think we’ve been so careful around you?” Luke stressed, “We don’t know if we will say something to set you off—I’ve lied to your face for the sake of keeping you here longer.”

Ben caught his uncle’s wording clearly. “What do you mean lied to my face?” He stepped back, “I don’t understand—”

“Your girlfriend—Rey—was in my class. Not a former student, but a current, actual student,” Luke admitted with little regret or guilt; he almost seemed to become free at his admission. “I have been her Creative Writing professor since August.”

“What?” Ben uttered, not understanding how it was possible. Rey knew Skywalker was his uncle; he told her, yet she remained mummed about the entire matter. Thinking of all the times she referred to her professor—'he’s a dick,' 'he didn’t even read my work,' 'I was kicked out of the class,' 'he flat out told me he never liked me'—it made sense.

Rey’s horrendous Creative Writing professor was Luke.

“You’re a serious arsehole, you know that?”

Ben and Luke turned to the sound of her voice, Rey standing frighteningly still in the archway. Unshed tears pooled in her eyes, as her gaze darted from Luke to Ben—hardening on her supposed boyfriend. While she stood tall, head held high, her expression was on the verge of crumpling.

“Luke—I understand him being a dickwad. He’s naturally apt at it,” she spoke slowly, but firmly, “But you—Ben—I thought you would have been above lying.”

He flinched at her tone, “Rey, what are you talking about—”

“I stood here,” she pointed down to the floor, her shoulders and jaw tensing as she began to croak, “I heard you talking about her—my mother;” she gasped at the word, sucking in air quickly. “You knew, and I tried so fucking hard to give you the benefit of the doubt, because your Ben and you don’t know how to keep anything from me because we tell each other everything—”

“Well, apparently not,” Ben stated harshly, feeling suddenly on guard around Rey.

Her eyes flew to behind him, where Luke stood apologetically, and Han and Leia stood further back by the landing observing with regretful eyes. Heat rose to her cheeks, the concerned and pitiful gazes of his family causing Rey to feel lost under their welcoming home.
Swiftly, she caught Ben’s arm and dragged him by the wrist to the nearest available room; the laundry room right off the kitchen. He came along willingly, seeming to be on the same page for once the last few days.

They needed to talk.

The door slammed shut behind them.

The three remaining individuals in the dining area glanced warily at each other.

“Does this mean, Thanksgiving is canceled?” Han asked.

Leia rolled her eyes.

“You lied to me,” she said lowly the instant they were alone in the laundry room.

“You’re really going to go there,” Ben spoke sternly, arms crossed over his chest. “Because if I recall correctly, you fucking lied to me too,” he growled, focusing intently on the floor while he chewed on his lower lip. One of the multitude of nervous habits Rey began to notice the longer they spent in each other’s company. “You knew, you goddamn knew how I felt about my uncle. Yet you kept it from me—”

“It’s not like I purposely thought ‘hey, I’m going to be a bitch and not tell Ben his uncle is my professor’—”

“Well what else would you think?” he rebutted brutally.

Rey became fierce, her jaw tightening and shoulders tensing back, “You were crying, having a fucking panic attack—” she swiped her hair away from her face, “—what, what am I supposed to do? Hmm? ‘Oh, by the way, your borderline abusive uncle’—”

“Don’t be so kind and say ‘borderline’—”

Rey ignored Ben’s sadistic interjection, plowing through with her thought, “That would have sent you into a tizzy!” she shouted, their weak attempt at a hushed conversation thrown out the window.

He dropped his arms, a frantic hand raking through his hair, “You could have told me later, Rey. Not everything needs to be in that moment.”

She scoffed. “By the time I had enough courage to tell, it didn’t even matter anymore anyways.”

Ben caught clear of her phrasing, “What the hell does that mean?”

She fell silent, inhaling deeply. Chewing on the inside of her cheek, her eyes glistened for a moment, stealing with a blink of an eye.

“What happened?” he uttered, confused by her subtle demur reaction.

“I’m sort of kicked out of the class—again,” she admitted quietly, eyes dropping away to the side.

Ben gapped, Rey’s shiftiness suddenly becoming more pronounced. Shutting his mouth, his mind surged towards a conclusion.
“What did you do?”

“What did you assume I did something?” she gritted.

“Because you’re you, and you don’t know how to let something die,” Ben stated plainly, not in the mood to get looped into another petty argument about assumptions. Especially when it came to Rey’s actions in the classroom and opinions on writing.

“That’s bullshit coming from you,” she said, affronted by his comment. “You’re the biggest grudge holder I know!”

“It’s not a grudge if it’s validated.” Ben corrected, “What did you tell him? His comments were useless, he didn’t understand your point of view? Did he tell you your work is uninspired—”

“Stop projecting, you arse. Stop—”

“I’m not projecting!” he stressed.

“Yes, Ben. You are!” Rey called out aggressively.

“No, I’m not,” he fought back, “I know Skywalker; you must have done something to hurt his ego —”

“He kicked me out because of you!”

Ben stopped talking, noticing the fire burning in Rey’s eyes. “He kicked me out because of my connection to you,” she spat, “From the first day, he loathed me—and it was all because I reminded him of you.”

“And you’re upset with me—”

“God, no, Ben!” Rey moaned aggravatedly, wiping her forehead. “If I was upset with you, why the fuck would you be here? Why would I even bother with you?”

“Because—”

“Because I love you, you fucking idiot!” she shouted over him and his excuses, “Even when you are an absolute monster, I love you.”

“I know I am—” Ben stated miserably.

“No, I’m talking,” she gritted, “You listen to me.” Inhaling deeply, she regarded him as evenly as she could, adrenaline pulsing through her erratically. “I brought you in here to talk about how you lied to me about my family.”

“Rey—”

“Shut up!” Rey warned, raising a finger up at him. “Instead, you turned this conversation around and made it about you—and your uncle and how I’m the bad guy—”

“I never said you were the bad guy—you’re putting words into my mouth,” Ben said shaking his head, “You’re blowing this out of proportion. Why didn’t you go to administration about this?”

“And there you go!” She threw her hands up. “Changing the conversation, again.”

He laughed mirthlessly, “Its not changing the conversation if it was the original topic.”
“It was never the original topic!” She exclaimed over his booming voice. “I never we to admin because it is not that big of a deal.”

“Of course it is a big ‘deal’ Rey. This is your future we’re talking about,” he explained. He could not help but be offended she thought so little of herself on the matter. “You need to go to administration about this, get him on probation, something—”

“See this is why I did not tell you,” she waved to him, stepping further away. Air, she needed air away from all…this. Ben and his family, and his issues. Not to mention her own. Standing close together in the cupboard of a room with Ben was causing her to fell claustrophobic. “Because…because you’d get upset and involved—”

“Yes, I’m going to be upset and involved,” Ben told her bluntly, “I care about you so much, I want you to be everything you want to be.”

“I didn’t want you to worry. Your life is a mess right now with the First Order and—”

“I’m going to worry about you.” Ben cut her off, not wanting to hear anymore of her arguments as why she never said anything.

All was said and done, and they were here now. Neither could go back and fix things—Rey telling him sooner might have done more harm than good, but he still wouldn’t be happy about this development all the same. She lied by omission, he wasn’t too sure what this meant for either of them.

A breathy chuckle escaped him, his throat constricting causing his speech to come out choppy, “I always worry about you, even before I honestly knew you.” He swallowed, his throat dry, “because you’re here and I’m over there.” She blinked blearily up at him, neither moving forward. Instead, they embraced the stillness anchoring them down and away from each other. “I don’t get to see you every day, sometimes we both get too busy to call or text—and I understand that happens. But I’m always going to worry in some way when you are not beside me.”

“Ben…” Rey croaked.

He exhaled sharply. Resisting the urge to pull her into his arms, Ben clenched and unclenched his fists repeatedly, “And I didn’t know for sure about Kenobi,” her hazel eyes widen, her guard lowering for the first time in days. “I only knew earlier, maybe an hour, max.”

“But what about the journal?” Rey implored hesitantly.

Ben frowned, eyebrows knitting together, “What?”

“The journal you constantly have your nose in,” she stated opposingly, stepping forward. “The blue one.”

“Which one?” Ben asked.

“What do you mean—”

“Because the one I’m reading—oh, shit,” he mumbled as the pieces fell together.

“Two? As in two blue journals?”

“Did you find it—”
“Underneath the pillow. I thought you shoved it there after reading,” she explained. “So you never knew—”

“I mean, I thought for a fleeting moment, but not truly,” he admitted. “I didn’t now if they knew…”

“Oh,” she mumbled, squeezing her eyes shut.

“Is—is that why you’ve be cold to me these last couple of days?” Ben asked, sounding small.

“Maybe…” She winced. A regretful groan built from the back of her throat. “I thought—”

“I’d keep information from you?” he said, hushed.

Rey bit her lips together, trying not think of the disappointment seeping from his voice into her bones.

“Rey, you need to understand…sweetheart, I’d never keep something that important from you—if knew, you’d be the first to know.”

“I can’t help, but—I don’t know—panic sometimes,” she crossed her arms over her chest. Glancing up at him through her eyelashes, Rey bit her lip. “I…I’m not going to apologize for how I reacted.”

“I don’t expect you to, I just…” Ben mirrored her, leaning away and against the sink, “I need you to trust me.”

Rey refrained a response, dropping her gaze from his intense, open eyes. “I’m…I’m going to go for a walk. To cool off,” she stated numbly, standing straighter.

“Alright,” Ben nodded, not trusting himself to speak further.

“I’ll be back in a few,” she started for the door, before turning back to Ben, “Please…please just—I really love your family. And I feel like a fool loosing it in front of them—”

“Don’t worry,” Ben hushed her, reaching past her to open the door, “I will handle everything. go on your walk. I think we both need it.”

Leaning up, she pressed a feather kiss to his chin, “Thank you,” she muttered.

Brushing past him, Rey left the room on a path to the front door.

If there was one thing Ben hated, it was watching her leave. Only this time, there was a promise of returning.


He needed to make a decision…soon.

Chapter End Notes

WELLLLLLLL. THAT HAPPENED.
Wonder what Ben is going to do? Hmmm.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! :D
You're Going Down a Path I Cannot Follow

Chapter Summary

Rey and Ben have an important conversation.

Chapter Notes

Typos will be fixed later.

Also, I am sorry I haven't responded to all the comments from the last few chapters! Please know I have read them and I appreciate every world and thought you share. It warms my heart to know how much so many of you adore and celebrate this fic, I am moved to tears by the love I have been blessed with through this work. Thank you!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Well, at least it’s nice out…” Ben muttered, his gaze directed to the midnight blue sky.

For once the clouds decided to take a rest for the night, the sky clear with blinking twinkles of constellations Ben never bothered to learn. He preferred not knowing, making up his own stories and rules for the stars.

Beside him, Rey remained silent. Similar to how she acted when she came back from her cool-off walk. Bless his mother, as she tried to make everything normal when Rey returned and everyone sat down for dinner. One of the most quiet and tense dinner’s Ben experienced in his life, and he lived alone.

Han kept his mouth shut, along with Luke. Chewie mumbled and grumbled, but nothing to cause a stir. Initially, Leia spoke to fill the air before stopping all together when no one else decided to participate. Once the food was eaten, Luke immediately excused himself, saying a blanket goodbye to everyone in the room.

Ben didn’t repeat the sentiment; Rey, however, did.

She also got the television to finally work and went through the process of showing Han how to access all the features.

Despite how much Ben desired to ask his mother more questions about Vader, and hinted for anything she’d potentially share, she stayed mum.

A gut feeling settled within him as a startling realization came to fruition; Leia…Leia might not have ever truly known her father. Nor did she have the desire, Ben concluding his uncle had been the one somewhat in contact with their father. A startling, yet not unexpected revelation.

Ben did not probe his mother further; he’d let the issue die with her. If he wanted answers, he was
clearly going to have to find them elsewhere.

“I prefer it cloudy,” Rey spoke up, eyes drifting to the sky. “It feels homey…like home.”

He didn’t argue. Her point was valid.

He kicks a lost pebble, shoving his hands into his jacket pockets. The pebble hits Rey’s shoe. Ben expects her to kick it back, but she doesn’t. Instead, she steps over it without a pause.

Swallowing, he speaks. “I…I’ve been meaning to ask…what are you going to do about Kenobi?”

“What do mean what am I going to do?” Rey reiterates to him, her face devoid of expression. Briefly, she shivers from the breeze. She buttons up her light coat, her focus intently on her task.

“How I said,” Ben bites his lips together, afraid to glance in her direction. “What are you going to do? I have his address, he’ll only talk to you—”

“He wants to talk to his granddaughter,” she interrupts swiftly, “I am not his granddaughter.”

Baffled, Ben halts, blinking down at her, “But you are. We had an entire discussion about it.”

Stopping her gait, she doesn’t look him in the eye. “Grandparents would contact their grandchild. Not create a fucked scavenger hunt type shit to find them,” she states monotonously, shrugging as an afterthought, “I really want him to be grandfather, in ever essence of the word, but I cant. I physically cannot.”

“What do you mean you ‘physically cannot’?” He eyed her cautiously, a hand gently resting on her shoulder.

“I physically get sick at the thought,” she explained harshly, “Ben, I spent half my so-called ‘cool off walk’ throwing up.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” he asked, his mind conjuring up images of Rey sitting on the side of the road, vomiting. Anxiety induced vomiting was…awful. He knew from experience; it felt impossible to breathe and everything was crushing from the inside out.

She experience it all alone.

“Because it’s my business—and I can’t—I can’t view that man, whoever he is as my relative. Blood or not,” she sniffed, crudely wiping her nose with the hem of her sleeve.

“I think…I think you should talk to him,” Ben admitted quietly.

Her head snapped up, hazel eyes wide. “What?”

Ben rubbed her shoulder, feeling the tension increase in her body by the second. “You should talk to him, he’s your family. And it seems like you’re the only one he is willing to talk to,” Ben explained logically, hoping she’d understand his point of view. “He’s the only one who knows about your past, who you are—”

“I know who I am—I don’t need some old man to tell me who that is,” she rebuffed, tucking her loose hair behind her ear. “I’ve known who I am all my life.”

“Really? Because the Rey I met, was fucking lost. And she told me so several times,” he said softly, now gripping both her shoulders steady. “I’m just trying to help you here. Its better to latch on to who you know might be able to give you answers, than make family figures out of people
who would just let you down.”

She flinched back, her head cocking to the side, “What the hell’s that supposed to mean? Me, making family figures…”

Loosening his grip on her slightly, Ben wiped his face with one hand that ended up raking through his hair. Gazing down at her, he articulated his opinion carefully, “I believe, you might be trying to find people to fill the roles that were abandoned.”

She scoffed, shutting her mouth quickly. She huffed, a smile of disbelief forming, “Are—are you telling me—”

“My parents are going to disappoint you. Just like how Luke disappointed you—they are not going to be the parents you lost, when they don’t know how to be parents to their own fucking child,” he rambled out in one ragged breath.

Rey stepped out of his grasp, “I beg your pardon?” She shook her head, eyes blinking rapidly, “You’re—you’re psychoanalyzing me, and I don’t fucking appreciate it.”

“That’s not what I am trying to do,” he said hastily.

“Then what are you trying to do, Ben?” Rey asked heatedly. “Because I don’t think you have the right to say anything about how your parents treated you—”

“Oh, just so now that they are trying to be proactive and are chummy-chummy in your life, you take their side of the situation?” Ben blurted out, suddenly feeling like he was loosing control of the conversation. This was supposed to be about Rey contacting Kenobi, not about his family. They were going to talk about her for once—he was trying the listen to what she said earlier.

Clearly, he wasn’t doing this right.

“We just came from their place—and I am always on your side, whether you believe it or not. If anyone doesn’t know how to be on someone’s side, it is you Ben.”

“ Seriously? Because last I recalled, I shut down an entire company for you,” he bit back.

“I didn’t ask you to do that; you did that on your own,” she argued back, surprised by the events of the First Order shut down were being brought up. They never spoke further, or truly about how she’d been the catalyst for the events leading to its shut down. For Ben to finally acknowledge his grandfather’s legacy and own up to accepting what was the truth.

“And I don’t regret doing that,” Ben defended, taking a step back from her. “I do not regret doing that at all because it helped you—”

“See—you can’t just do things because they help me, or you think that they help me. Your decisions need to make sense for you—”

“Then what do you expect me to do?” Ben asked, his voice echoing the empty street. “You want me to help you but then you don’t want me to help you. Our entire relationship has been based off of me helping you.”

“You’re not understanding what I am saying,” she huffed. Turning on her heel, she resumed her walk.

“Okay, then tell me what I am not understanding,” he demanded, only needing to take a few strides
to catch up with her. She picked up her pace, “I’m not yelling, I’m not shouting, I am just trying to have a conversation with you.”

“Well, you’re kind of fucking awful at it,” she griped, slowing her steps.

Ben huffed a self-mocking laugh, “I know I am! That is why I’m trying to be better at this,” he caught her arm, “Please Rey…” he pleaded lowly, “Can we just…can we just finish our earlier conversation?”

She didn’t say ‘yes’ or ‘no’, but stopped walking away. That was a good enough answer for Ben.

“She’s good,” she breathed, crossing her arms over her chest. She stared levelly at him, her jaw locking and unlocking as she found the words to speak. “I am confused why you have a loving family, with all their flaws—because everyone is fucked up Ben, you need to accept that—and yet you’ve decided to spend the better part of the last ten years on the other side of the country.”

He stared back, the air knocked out of his lungs at her observation. Suddenly, he felt all the answers and explanations he can possibly give her would not be enough. Ben felt…Ben felt he wasn’t good enough for this girl. She wasn’t pure or perfect, but she was imperfect in a wonderful way Ben believed he’d never be able to compliment.

Honesty seemed to be his only option in this situation. Not that he ever actively lied to Rey. He could never lie to her, no matter how many times she lied to him.

Ben merely did not want to be honest with himself.

“I was irrational when everything happened,” he inhaled sharply, “I—I haven’t even told Amilyn this,” Ben muttered, smearing his clammy hands on his dark wash jeans. Taking a shaky breath he continued, “I was irrational. I know I was, and I had anger issues and anxiety—and I can’t use those as excuses for how I essentially abandoned my family, because I made an irrational decision and somehow I found myself making a somewhat of a life there,” he shifted from foot to foot. “Not necessarily the life I wanted, but I made friends. I eventually contacted my mother, after I was in a mild accident. It stirred a lot of memories which cause me to go to therapy—again,” he rolled his eyes in a self-deprecating manner. His voice dropped lower, Rey straining to hear him. “I…almost killed my dad, Rey. In the car crash we were in; I was the one driving, I was the one being the idiot behind the wheel. And that scars a person, especially since I totaled his car, his precious car and he and I were arguing about my plans for the future again and—” he coughed, trying his best to breathe slowly, and not in quick spurts. “Then all the shit with Luke happened while my dad was still recovering in the hospital—everything that could have gone to shit, went to shit that week. And I thought packing up my bags and leaving to New York like some guppy was the solution.”

Her hand reached up to his face, the pad of her thumb wiping away his stray, silent tears. Laying a hand over hers, Ben clutched on to her for to be his anchor.

“I thought for almost all those ten years, my dad hated me. I thought he’d disown me, or worse—which is stupid now, that I’m here and well, he doesn’t hate me,” he sighed, feeling a headache blooming from all the crying and shouting he’d experienced throughout the day. “And I don’t know what to do about that now—because I don’t know him, he doesn’t know me…” Ben shook his head, Rey releasing her grasp on him. Her arms crossed over herself, guarded, yet she remained in his bubble. “But, main point—I can be irrational, and I made an irrational decision which then led to living with the repercussion of those choices…” he trailed off, realizing how pathetic and ridiculous he sounded once he actually explained his actions.

Nervous, he crossed his arms over his chest, he and Rey mirroring each other.
“I see…I mean I knew about the car crash and how you and Han didn’t get along,” she pressed her lips together. She chewed on her bottom lip thoughtfully, her gaze downcast “I just never realized it was you driving or that everything that happened, had happened in such a short amount of time,” Rey admitted softly.

“Yup,” Ben confirmed, rocking slightly on the balls of his feet.

“I…I know that was supposed to make me understand, and make things better,” she grimaced, her face twisting in pain. She exhaled, her pooling tears released in gentle cascades. “But, but I can’t help but feel that—what if things go sour between us, bad, real bad—like-like how we were in the laundry room, and you decide to run off because everything is too much—”

“Rey, sweetheart that wouldn’t happen—”

She stepped back, wiping under her eyes furiously, “You say that, but you are irrational and emotional,” she hiccupped, shaking her head slightly. A dreadful sob reverberated through her body, “I don’t know what I’d do if you randomly decided to leave me all together like you left your family.”

Reaching for her, Ben pulled Rey into his arms. He held her close, feeling her shake from tears and sniffing. Cradling her head gently against his chest, Ben pressed firm kisses along her crown, unable to get out the pain he felt for causing her to feel in limbo with their relationship. Nose buried in her hair, Ben wanted to keep her wrapped in his arms for the rest of his life. Picturing her out of his plans seemed impossible considering how intertwined their lives became and were revealed to be.

“Let’s get married.”

She stilled in his arms.

Her fisted hands on his lower back dropped floppily to her sides.

Leaning back, she squinted at him “What?”

Brushing away her messy hair from her blotchy tear stained face, Ben kissed her firmly. She barely responded to his touch, her lips pursing on reflex but not the usual urge or indulgent excitement she possessed. Rearing back, he noticed her eyes blown wide.

Tucking her hair behind her ear, Ben repeated himself, “Let’s get married. We’d never have to worry about being separated again, or one of us leaving the other. We can really be together, wake up together, not have to worry so much,” he relieved chuckle rumbled through his chest, “You—you can come to New York, move in with me,” his grin grew boyish the longer he spoke of his plans, “My mother is leaving her house to me, we don’t even have to look for anywhere new. You can finish your education anywhere—you’re smart enough a transfer wouldn’t even be that much of a hassle, and we can finally be with each other, all the time.”

Surging forward, new tears pouring down his face, he tried to kiss her again. She remained stoic, before suddenly moving into hyperdrive. She pressed back on his shoulders.

He gazed down at her, confused.

“No,” she said breathlessly, “No, Ben.” Her vision began blurry, her chest constricting, “I won’t marry you.”

“What?”
“I—am not going to marry you,” she stated clearly, stepping away from him.

“We—we love each other, we want to be in a relationship. Rey there isn’t anyone else for me, but you,” Ben felt more tears streaming down his face the longer Rey stared, gapping at him in pain. “I don’t understand—”

“Just because we love each other, and care about each other doesn’t mean we should get married!” Rey cried out, her voice hoarse from the tears flowing freely. Her crying didn’t seem to stop not matter how many times she mentally scolded herself. “Ben…” she breathed, “We—we’ve only known each other for maybe, three months, we’ve been dating for less than one and we’ve physically been in the same space for about two weeks,” she shook her head a little, fighting off another shattering sob, “That…that’s not enough.”

“Then what will be enough? Because we are stuck in this hell of only seeing each other maybe once a month we are lucky,” Ben bit out, his voice sounding more growlish than man. Not from anger, but from heartbreak.

Rey knew she was breaking his heart, and it broke her own to deny his offer…because she loved him. She might even say she liked him. She genuinely liked listening to him ramble and talk while watching a movie. Liked when he wrote in his journal, his eyebrows pinched and glasses dipping down his nose. She liked so many thing about him, and loved him with every fiber of her being.

But she could not let him do this, or pressure her into doing this…marriage.

Not when neither she or Ben were ready for such a step. Finishing school came first for Rey; she worked hard and spent many sleepless nights studying and writing to earn he degree. Up and leaving for the East coast caused her anxiety to pique—Ahch-To was her home. Would always be her home because her ragtag family was here; she came into her own while living in the little sleeper town. To leave Ahch-To would be to leave a part of herself.

She wasn’t ready to leave parts of herself scattered when she barely knew how to mend what was already torn.

Ben…her faith in him remained unwavering despite all his flaws, his mistakes, and his biting words. With his mess of a life, he could not possibly believe marriage was the best option.

He was panicking, similar to herself.

“I…I hate that we never get to see each other,” she admitted, “I really fucking do because no one else understands me like you do, because you’re Ben and you’re mine,” she groaned into her hands, before shaking them out. She focused on her breathing, feeling Ben’s deep eyes examining her every move. “And nothing is going to change that, because like you said there isn’t anyone else for me, and I don’t want anyone else for me.”

“Then say ‘yes,’” Ben begged, clasping her hand in his. She tried not to relish in the feel of skin to skin contact. “Say ‘yes’ and we can get married at City Hall or fucking Vegas for all I care, I just want us to be together.”

“Ben—we can’t,” she heaved, giving up on wiping her tears and snot. She was a mess, a complete and utter mess. So was he—his eyes rimmed red, his face pale—and there was something about the mirroring moment she did not want to obscure. Taint. “That’s what I’m trying to say. Please don’t make me say it,” she asked, biting her lips together, muffling another betraying sob.

She forced him to release her hand. He let go with little effort, as though becoming a shell of a man.
His face crumpled.
She couldn’t look away.
“You want to break up?”
“Yes.”

The rest of the walk was silent.
Neither looked at one another.
They tried their best to ignore the presence of the other.
They were lonely.
Lonely…together.
The once clear sky became clouded with grey, the late night mist setting in.
Rey thought it felt like home…now she was not too sure.

“Here,” Rey muttered, handing Ben the extra set of sheets she found in the back of the closet.
He nodded, taking the offer. They both decided it best he sleep in the living room, Rey scrounging
for blankets and pillows for Ben to use.
Shaking out the top sheet, Ben began to cover the couch. On the other end, Rey picked up the
unattended edge. Together, they tucked the grey sheet into place.
“I was able to get an earlier flight. It’s in the afternoon, but going through LAX so…,” he trailed
off, finding his voice again in moments, “I’ll be leaving early tomorrow morning.”
“Oh,” she uttered softly, “Alright,” ducking her head down, she peaked at him through the corner
of her eyes, “I guess this is…”
“A ’see you later,’” Ben supplied quickly, dropping the quilt she loaned him in the middle of the
couch.

“That’s awfully cheesy,” Rey remarked, fluffing his pillow.

“I don’t want to say ‘goodbye’,” he admitted tiredly, facing her fully. She noticed he must have changed when she locked herself in the bathroom for a solid thirty minutes. Cleaning her face and crying some more, before steeling herself to see him again. He was wearing pajama pants and a looser, softer t-shirt. “Especially since I don’t want this to be a ‘goodbye’ forever.”

“Of course not,” Rey breathed, “This is…just temporary,” she stressed, not sure if she was stating a fact or trying to convince herself her statement was indeed a fact. They were setting a time to get back together, or saying it was ‘break’ like Finn and Rose.

Rey and Ben were breaking up. They were breaking because of timing. Both their lives were too complicated and mess at the moment, not to mention the distance taking a toll.

Executing with maturity, they both agreed they’d wait until the timing was right.

Whenever that would be.

Neither dared to voice the fear of the timing never being right.

“Well…” Rey sighed, crossing her arms over her chest, “I’m going to head to bed,” Stepping back, she made her way to hall before stopping, “And I’m sorry this happened on your birthday. You… you don’t deserve that.”

“Thank you,” Ben answered, watching her retreat back to her room without another glance his way.

Tossing and turning for the umpteenth time since laying down, Rey released an agitated huff. Shifting to lay on her stomach, she groaned lowly into her pillow.

It was weird sleeping in her bed without Ben. He usually consumed more than half the space, and was an excellent little spoon. Able to feel the hard planes of his back and taut stomach when she held him close. How his face would press into her neck in his sleep, his breathing delightfully tickling her skin…

Sitting up from her bed, Rey shucked off her blankets. Quietly, she padded across the room to the bedroom door—

And found Ben standing on the other side, fist poised to knock.

He dropped his hand back to his side. Rey released her grip on the door knob.

At the doorway the two stared at one another. The only sound in the apartment was their breathing.

“Rey—”

She pulled him down into a rushed kiss, her hands clumsily fisting his shirt. Their teeth clattered awkwardly, Rey wincing into the kiss. Embarrassment creped in her, tempted to abort her impulsive mission. However she was surprised when she felt his large, comforting hands began to balance her.
He’d been startled for a moment, until his brain finally caught up with his mouth. His soft lips began to move against hers, a languid movement with urgency kindling under the surface. Feeling her struggle to reach, Ben’s arms wrapped around her, her legs scrambling to gain leverage. Sliding his hand down from her back to under her thigh, Ben helped steady her, feeling her hold tighten against him.

He shuffled them along to her bed, their pants increasing as their mouths nipped together ruthlessly, seeking serenity within one another’s steady grasp. All the fight and pain they felt that night resurged in full force. Hands clawing scathingly while withering under subtle caresses. As gently as he could, without losing his grip on her, Ben lowered Rey on to the mattress.

Momentarily, Ben hovered, his arms braced on either side of her head. Their chests heaved in tandem, he feeling the brush of her breasts with every shuddery breath. Her legs caged his hips, Ben resisting the urge to thrust against her. His arousal increased the longer she gazed up at him with hooded eyes.

There was a reason she was getting up to leave her room. Undoubtedly, the same reason Ben found himself summoning up the courage to knock on her door.

Gently, her fingers trailed the outline of his face. Her index finger followed all the edges, angles and lines, absorbing the image of him, with her in the dead of night. Shadows from her twinkling lights and the window filled the room, the two only able to see each other in the dim light. Catching her palm, he pressed a feather kiss to her pulse. A tremble bloomed through her under his gaze, feeling blinding honesty in every stroke and skim of his tender touch.

Ben loved her, and she loved him, and maybe one day this wouldn’t be an act of loss…instead an act of hope.

His dark eyes bored into her hazel, silently asking for permission.

A subtle nod from her was enough to send him deeper into her embrace, their lips crashing together, followed by a messy tangle of hands yanking and tugging at clothing. Her flimsy night shirt was lost in their haste, Ben palming her braless breast while another warm hand travel down the slight of her waist.

Losing her breath, Rey broke their kiss. Ben did not seem to mind as his lips began to pepper and nuzzle against the exposed skin of her neck. Her fingers carded roughly though his locks, before fisting in his as Ben began to work down the valley of her chest.

Involuntarily, her hips bucked up, chasing the need for more. For more of him than the gentle and lingering touches. But to feel all of him— on her, in her, with her. She need him before all was lost and they parted ways.

Shoving the hem of his shirt over his head, Rey’s eyes consumed the sight of him greedily. Her hands splayed over his back, roughly pulling him closer until she did not need to stretch up to nuzzle into his firm chest.

She became intoxicated by his ministrations and low groans as his hand stroked her over the fabric of her shorts.

“Ben I—”

“I know, I feel it too,” he spoke between labored breaths. Brushing away Rey’s loose locks from her face, Ben fingers lingered on her temple. “I’m…”he swallowed, his apology disappearing
within his pause. Apologies were futile, Ben believing words of pleading and begging were no longer going to fix what was broken. Only they could save themselves, not each other. Dipping his head back into her welcoming body, his lips traveled a gradual, nonsensical pattern down her neck to her chest to her navel. Tiny, frustrated whines sounded from her, he felling the mild, enticing vibrations through skin on skin contact. Lifting his head up, their eyes connected heatedly. “You’re not alone,” he murmured across her skin as a promise.

“Neither are you,” she uttered in the moment of stillness, her nails needing into his scalp. Teasing, urging, pleading.

Urgently, she pulled him back up to meet her lips. He complied with little complaint, melting into her force under the cloak of the dim light.

Bodies pressed together, soft moans and silent tears filled the room. Tonight they could love like it was night goodbye.

Sheets changed and folded, it was almost as if nothing happened.

Her blurry vision made everything feel less real. How maybe the entire night was dream, a hallucination from the depths of her mind.

Ben did not spend the night in her room. Ben did not hold her in his arms until his alarm went off. Ben did not cry and kiss her until she had to physically shove him out the door.

Or how she did not go running after him moments later, only to find Ben gone. Already in his Uber, off to the bus station, and then to the airport to leave back across the country.

He left. He’d done as she asked…and everything felt real. Blissfully wonderful, achingly painful real.

They didn't even say 'love you, bye'.

Numbly, Rey picked up her laptop from her desk.

She had an email to write to administration concerning her creative writing seminar.

Lost in her thoughts and unaware, a letter-sized envelope fell from her bed. Cutting through the air between the bedframe and the wall, the envelope landed without a sound.

Ben’s perfect, cursive penmanship adorned the front—

For Rey.

Chapter End Notes

Yes. They had sex. And it was goodbye sex. And they broke up.

Now dear reader, this needed to happen.

I have been planning for them to break up for a long time. This is not a goodbye
though; this is merely a stepping stone in their relationship. It needed to be done.

I can promise, by the end of this fic, Rey and Ben will be happy with each other and together. But right now they need to figure out somethings on their own and being together is hindering their growth.

This does not mean communication between the two will stop.

This title is after all, Of *Penmanship* and Discourse ;)

There will be an update on Saturday 9/8/18. So I wont leave you all hanging and wallowing for long.

Let me know what you think; comments and kudos are always appreciated!

Love you, bye.
An Interlude: Seven Years Later

Chapter Summary

A peek into Rey and Ben's lives.

Chapter Notes

NOW.

NEVER SAY I DON'T LOVE ANY OF YOU.

This chapter is a nice little fluffy type thing to help you all chill for a moment and be reminded, YES, our stupid impulsive couple will be together in the end. ALSO, if you read closely, you might find a couple of things that WILL happen within the last ten chapters of the fic. And pay attention to the absence of particular things—those are important too.

The next update will still be on 9/8/18. This is just something to help you, as the hip kids say, *cool your tits*.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

While Naboo was no Ahch-To, it has a tranquil quality of its own.

Picturesque hills and serene lakes, the small town lived in an alcove of the world, lost in the mountains of Northern California.

Somehow Naboo became their home. Ahch-To held too many painful memories for her husband, while New York was too loud and bright for their personalities.

She’d always been surrounded by grey—green was her only condition when they moved. Somewhere green and lush, stilly thriving.

Glancing at the clock on the corner of her screen, Rey hummed in surprise. It was already half past four in the afternoon; she was done for the day.

Saving her article, Rey began to shut down her work computer.

Swiftly, she packed up her belongings, making sure she didn’t leave anything behind over the weekend. Her office may have been in town, but trekking to the Lake Tribune on a Saturday did not reek of appeal.

Walking by the other smaller offices, she called out a blanket farewell to her fellow co-workers who remained. Possibly finishing their edits for the paper and website next morning issue.
Her walk was short, maybe only twenty minutes long if she didn’t get distracted by the community of downtown. Rounding the corner, she paused a moment by the bookstore a block away from her and her husband’s cottage. An idea bloomed in her mind.

They’d only went in there once, Ben purposefully hiding all the books with collections or editing’s from a certain ‘Kylo Ren’. Despite not working under the pseudonym for years, older editions and books were still sold at small shops.

She checked her watch—she still had time.

A bell tingled as she stepped into the shop, a young man—a teenager—with his nose buried deep in a book sat at the counter.

Quietly, Rey perused the stacks, halting as she came across the fantasy/magical realism section.

Sitting on the shelf was *The Scavenger and the Lost Prince*, the thirtieth anniversary edition. Along with a forward by Ben Solo and brief interview on the back. Brushing the spine with the pad of her thumb, Rey sighed.

She missed her grandfather with all his flaws…his constant need to have the higher ground.

Fondly shaking her head, Rey continued to amble through the rows of older and newer books. Stopping by the non-fiction section, her eyes caught the book she’d been searching for. She tucked it under her arm, heading to the register.

The young man set his book down—

*Of Penmanship & Discourse* By Ben Solo.

“Huh, that’s an interesting read,” Rey remarked with a smile.

He frowned, “Just because it is a romance doesn’t mean I can’t enjoy it—it has much more than mushy-gushy stuff.”

A surprised laugh escaped Rey, “No, of course not, I wasn’t commenting on that. The book *is* interesting, just controversial. I don’t know many people who have actually read it” she glanced at the worn binding, “and reread with enthusiasm.”

The young man scanned her book, “I mean yeah, it is. But it’s real, ya know.”

“Oh, I *know*,” Rey smirked to herself, the implication caught unaware by the boy. “It’s just…a lot of people get upset—”

“When she rejects his proposal,” he supplied readily. “I know. Which is stupid.”

“How so?”

He huffed dropping her book down into the paper bag. “They are both at fault,” he explained, “She has abandonment issues and he expected her to drop everything she worked for to be with him, and then he doesn’t know what he wants to do with his life and keeps doing what everyone expects from him. It’s really sad.”

“A very valid point,” she scanned for a name tag, “*Trevor.*” She nodded, finding the name fitting for the young man.

“Plus, I’ve read this book like twelve times. I know they get together in the end. I honestly think
them separating for a bit was for the best—gives them time to grow up,” he defended, arms crossed petulantly. His eyes drifted to the register, “Your total is $14.83.”

Digging into her purse for her wallet, Rey hummed in agreement. “I most often hear she reacted wrongly—immaturely,” she said quietly, her voice edging on regret, “…which I understand. She is not the most likable person.”

She handed over exact change, a habit from her adolescence she could never break.

“But that is what I love about the character Rachel,” Trevor stated assuredly, taking the payment, “She is kind of awful half the time, but aren’t we all?” The change clinked, connecting with the coins in the register. “And she’s like twenty—we all say mean and stupid things in our twenties. It’s when you’re in your thirties, that’s when you realize that’s just who you are and got to live with it.”

He placed her receipt in the bag, Rey studying him with curiosity—the kid reminded her of Ben, all critical and passionate with an edge of negativity. She found it humorous how a similar sounding young man would be attracted to a romance novel, one which was a critical darling and commercial flop.

“That’s extremely insightful of you,” Rey complimented.

He shrugged, “Yeah, well people need to give Ben Solo more credit; he writes real people with real problems.”

Rey smiled at the praises, picking up the bag, “Are you a fan of his work then?”

While downtrodden for most of their conversation, the young man lit up. “Hell yeah—he’s a living legend. I can only hope to write as good as him one day.”

Chewing the inside of her cheek, Rey pondered for a moment.

Ben did mention he had one slot left in his three week writing workshop…

“Would you be interested in taking a writing class?” She asked, the kid cocking his head to the side at the thought. Stunned she was taking an interest in his musing, no doubt. “My husband is teaching a short workshop next week; fee is low, and the university hosting it will make payment plan options if necessary.”

“That would be cool…” he muttered, watching as Rey started to write down the information on a scrap of paper.

“You can contact him here, just don’t go give that out everywhere,” she warned, Trevor puzzled by her stern glare she sent his way. Handing the fold paper, she smiled knowingly. “I think you two would get along well.”

She head to the door, her book hidden nicely in the paper bag.

“Thank you…”

“Rey—Rey Solo,” she nodded before pushing open the door.

“Hey, I think I got someone for your workshop!” Rey called out into the house, shutting the front
door behind her. She dropped her keys into the bowl on the ledge, and her purse shrugged off lazily to the bench.

“Really?” Her husband’s voice carried from the kitchen mixing with the hissing from the stove.

She kicked off her shoes and rounded the entry way into the kitchen, the book clutched tightly to her chest.

Hovering a spoon over the boiling pot, Ben Solo sent her a wide smile, his glasses dipping down his nose. For once in the last forty-eight hours he did not look homeless or have a severe bedhead. His longer hair brushed the middle of his neck, washed and dried, and he was cleanly shaven. A first for the month since he’d been locking himself up in his office every morning to finish the next chapter of his novel. While he tried not to be a hermit for the most part, Rey pushing him to take the dogs on walks and trails in the area and at least writing for an hour at the coffee shop down the road, Ben secluded himself whenever deadlines loomed.

Seeing him roaming the house, showered, and without a catatonic lost look in his eye was a good sign. He finished and he can finally focus on more important matters—such as teaching and spending time with family.

Rey rose an eyebrow, “I thought we agreed I’d cook tonight since it is your birthday.”

“And I decided since it is my birthday, that I can choose if I want to cook tonight,” Ben shot back with a gleeful smirk. “Don’t worry it’s nothing complicated; just mac and cheese,” she tilted her head to the side, her eyes shifting to the bacon popping on the stove, “with bacon.”

“Yum,” Rey remarked lightly, bumping her shoulder into his side.

Leaning towards each other, their lips met for a sweet, brief kiss. Her insides summersaulted at the short burst of affection, Ben able to make her feel girlish and squirmish with a simple gaze and touch.

The pasta was nearly done boiling, but seemed to need another few minutes. Enough time to pull his away from his work.

“Now take a break real quick so I can give you your gift,” she cajoled, tugging lightly on his sleeve.

“We agreed no gifts this year, for both birthdays and Christmas,” Ben claimed, setting his spoon aside.

She peered up at him, mischief dancing in her eyes, “But we made that rule a month ago, which is not fair since you got me a gift for my birthday,” she rolled her eyes. Ben suggested the rule strategically, right before his own birthday. However, Rey knew his patterns well.

“Fine,” Ben waved, leaning back against the counter, “Give me a gift.”

Grinning she handed over the bag.

Carefully he lifted the book, stunned silent by the title.

“Are you…are you serious?” he asked quietly.

“I know we said we’d always wait until the time is right—when I was done with school, and we both had steady jobs and when we weren’t so fucked up—”
“Rey—”

“And you already used the letter idea for the proposal and I wasn’t going to copy you—”

“Sweetheart—”

“And I think we should start trying, and this is my way of telling you I think we might be ready,” Rey breathed, her hands fiddling together as she stared up at him hopefully. “I want kids.”

He glanced down at the book once more— *What to Expect When You’re Expecting.*

Children were a difficult subject. Initially, both were not necessarily fond of children, or the idea of being responsible for minors. Rey was as equally terrified of becoming a mother as Ben was to becoming father; their own parents were not the best, even when they tried. Years of communicating openly and some therapy finally made the prospect less daunting, and Ben finally seeing his parents point of view caused his resentment to simmer. Forgiving and facing the truth was a longer process on Rey’s part, but she eventually found peace, or at the very least, comprehension of her parent’s choices. Children were still not an option in very early stages of their relationship—if it could even be called such at that time of purely cell phone and email communication.

Things changed once Ben began teaching, and kids suddenly weren’t so intimidating. Oddly enough, children liked Ben and his dorkiness. It must have been the hair or his height, or his comforting deep voice. Kids liked to talk to him, and listened to Ben with rapt attention.

Somewhere along the way he wanted kids and Rey’s heart could not help but swell at the image of a baby with his ears and her eyes.

“So…what do you say?” she asked, hazel eyes shining brightly at him.

Setting the book aside on the counter behind him, Ben pulled Rey closer.

“I…think you are insane,” she snorted at his comment, bracing her hands on his broad shoulders, “But I also think you’d be a great mother, and I only want to do this if you want to.”

Her arms snaked behind his neck, fingers tucking his hair behind his ears. A gesture he’d once been self-conscious of, but now preened in her gentle care.

“I do,” she leaned back to make direct eye contact with him. “I do want this, and I think I have for a while, I was just…”

“Scared?” he suggested knowingly.

“Yeah,” she sighed, not fighting the thought.

“I know,” he smiled slightly at her. “I am ready whenever you are, just tell me when to follow your lead.”

Chapter End Notes

REMEMBER: THIS IS NOT A TIME JUMP. Just a glimpse into the future ;
To clarify since I have been seeing it in the comments: Ben's birthday occasionally lands on Thanksgiving. In the U.S. Thanksgiving is always the fourth Thursday of November-- it doesn't have a set date. So sometimes his birthday happens to be the same day, sometimes it doesn't. So they aren't spending Thanksgiving alone.

Let me know what you think! Opinions, theories, how you think the last ten chapters will unfold? Not just for our lovely couple for all the characters (because they are all in pretty good places seven years into the future too!). Comments and kudos are always appreciated.

Thanks!
These Are Your First Steps...

Chapter Summary

A month with Rey.

Chapter Notes

Here is the next chapter. Shorter than usual, but Ben's chapter will be posted soon :) And I am slowly going through the comments! Will try to respond to everyone who commented on the previous chapter!

Typos will be fixed throughout the week.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They were able to go a week without communicating.

In the week, administration gave Rey the option to audit Skywalker’s class while he was under a tenure evaluation, to not affect her grade point average. Over her three years, she’d been an exemplary student, maintaining her scholarships and involvement in the universities community, it was the least they could do. She could either continue taking the class for ‘personal education enrichment’ or simply never attend the class again, letting die in the past.

Her hand itched to text Ben for his opinion.

Biting down on her wounded pride, Rey decided to attend the remaining four classes. Not for Ben, or her friends, but for herself. Deep down, she knew she needed to complete the course; she put too much time and effort to allow to go to waste.

She needed to prove to herself she was still Rey…but a better version.

During a late night at The Castle, Rey found herself flicking through the impulse buy postcards Maz set out for tourist.

Finding a nice simple picture of the Ahch-To docks, Rey wrote a simple message—

*Hello, from the other side.*

She tried not to smirk at the reference. Yes, a corny an cheesy line from a retired singer she was never particularly fond of…however Rey knew Ben loved Adele, wrote an entire email analyzing the lyrical quality of her work.
The postcard was mailed out the next day.

“Rey, I know…that you and Ben broke up, but you haven’t really talked about it,” Rose mentioned one afternoon. “I mean, I don’t want to pry, but none of us really know what happened. One day you two are together and the next Ben is on a flight back to New York…”

The two young women were working on different course assignments but thought it best to study with each other as finals loomed closer. Better to have few people around to them sane as papers met their deadlines and the nights grew longer.

Nose deep in a Greek History study guide, Rey shoot Rose a warry glance.

Rose continued, highlighting her notes. “I mean, I don’t want to pry, but none of us really know what happened. One day you two are together and the next Ben is on a flight back to New York…”

Her friend brought up a valid question and concern.

“We…we realized maybe now wasn’t the best time to be in a relationship,” Rey answered quietly, adjusting her glasses higher on her nose. She fiddled with the cap of her pen; shutting and closing with a click-click-click. “He…has a lot to figure out, and I needed some space. We rushed into things, Rose,” Rey answered monotonously, the explanation rehearsed in her mind a thousand times. Easier to say she and Ben needed space and time than they were both pushing and pulling at each other like frightened children. Only one of them shoved a little too hard and the other might swung back too sharp.

Rose’s bright eyes dimmed at the news, “Oh, okay,” she turned back to her work, “If you need anyone to talk to, I can kick Finn out of the apartment and we can have a girl’s night.”

Smiling slightly, Rey nodded, “Sounds like a plan…” Biting down on her lip, she focused back on Rose, “Thank you for, uh, not telling me I made the wrong decision. I know how much you guys liked him…”

“Rey, your my friend and I can tell it was something difficult for you to do. I am not going to judge you went it is not my relationship to judge,” Rose assured her, setting aside her notebook. “Now, I don’t know about you, but I am starving and pizza sounds amazing right now.” Rose hopped off the couch, picking up her cell phone to order.

“Make sure it has mushrooms!” Rey called out a beat later. From behind Rose waved in acknowledgement, going to the kitchenette. Seeing her friend happily call the local pizza parlor, Rey felt a bit of comfort knowing she wasn’t leaving. She’d miss these little moments with Rose.

A postcard came in the mail for her a week later.

A classic picture of the Brooklyn Bridge graced the front; Rey noted the return address no longer matched his apartment. Instead, it was Leia’s house in Kensington. He must have moved there in the span of a couple of weeks like he suggested they’d do.

She tried not to dwell too much on the matter.
Elegant penmanship stained the back—

_Adele? Really? That’s the best you could come up with?_

_Don’t get me wrong. Fantastic song. I just don’t think writing lyrics to a sad, break-up song is the most appropriate action. Or at least be tasteful with it and throw in The Smiths. They seem to fit us more than Adele._

~ Ben

A smirk tugged on her lips. How could he be witty and snappy in his writing, yet say all the wrong things at the wrong time when he opened his mouth?

Trekking the few blocks to the nearest souvenir and tourist trap on the pier, Rey selected a handful of postcards. Ranging from cheesy _Ahch-To_ in bold to minimalist photos of birds flying over the bay. Purposefully, she picked the ones that would cause Ben to cringe. Tacky photos and cheesy lyrics seemed to be the best method in her attempts to communicate without becoming addicted to the sound of a notification from him, or obsessively checking her email.

With a steady hand she wrote—

_Honestly, I think The Cure is the best representation of us._

_For example: Boys Don’t Cry (you definitely cry), Lovesong, Inbetween Days (for well…obvious reasons)._ 

_I use to have a Cure t-shirt…but I can’t remember where I left it._

~ Rey

Morning jogs became a fixture in her routine; not only on weekdays but weekends as well. At five in the morning she was out the door, passing through the silent streets, the waves crashing and ebbing her soundtrack. Not many residents were up early enough to sift through the morning mist, Rey often alone as she passed the houses into downtown, then across the beach, rounding back around to cut through the docks.

The sight of a lonesome man sitting on a bench by the bay caused Rey’s feet to stutter to a stop. Curious, she stepped closer the form becoming familiar.

Wrapped and zipped into a worn coat was Han Solo. A thermos was clutched in his hand, while binoculars dangled around his neck. Over the last two and a half weeks, Rey had seen the elder Solo sporadically. More doctors appointments, and helping Leia organize the house—she did get confirmation from Chewie Amilyn, Poe, and Ben shipped the remaining of Leia’s personal belongings—Han Solo was scarce from the auto shop.

Briefly she wondered why her boss was waiting patiently, gaze focused intently on the mild waters.

Then it dawned on Rey—

_It was Sunday._

Quietly, she joined him. He rose an eyebrow to her in greeting.
“I’m sorry,” Rey blurted out, immediately wincing once the words left her mouth. “I mean, I—I thought—I don’t know what I thought. But he was here and now he’s not,” she said miserably, failing at her attempts of indifference.

Han sighed deeply before handing her the thermos, “Kid, you have nothing to apologize for—I knew it was too good to be true.”

“What?”

“For Ben to really be back,” he shrugged a bit, his gruff voice warming the cool air, “I’ve known for a while he’d never truly comeback, even if things got better between all of us,” he sniffed, crossing his arms placently, “Or at the very least not completely return to Ahch-To, and I don’t blame him.”

She blinked, puzzled by the blunt declaration, “You don’t?”

“No,” Han said honestly, “Too much bad blood is here, no matter how much it may be his first home. Leia trying to being him back...” he shook his head resolutely “that woman has enough hope for a lifetime.”

Rey hummed in agreement; Leia loved her son deeply, and put so much faith in others it was a wonder she did not become scorned.

“Oh, here they come,” Han muttered, lifting his binoculars up to get a better view.

Silently, the two sat side by side, watching the sea lions bob in and out of the water.

A postcard with a picture of a miniature schnauzer on the front came in a couple of days later—

_Personally, I think ‘To Wish Impossible Things’ should have been a selection in that round up._

_And the shirt you mentioned—it ended up in my laundry when you visited._

_I can mail it back to you if you want._

~ Ben

“I simply think you should use more sentence variation,” Rey stated, eyes scanning her notes over Boba’s essay. Her purple ink bled across his manuscript, little notes scribbled all over the place. She tried not to think about how proud Ben would be if he saw her work now. “There is power in periods and white space.”

Small murmurs of agreement sounded around the circle, pens scratching and keyboards clicking.

Their last workshop before turning in their final essay; a flash fiction piece.

For once writing fiction came to her easily. Or maybe she finally felt she had a story to share, her own experiences to fueling the piece.

“We are all adults here; complex sentences should not be that difficult to comprehend,” Boba
rejected heatedly.

Subtly, Rey rolled her eyes, sharing a look with Rose. Boba Fett may possibly be the most ignorant writer, and he was sticking to his guns in the last class. Typical.

“Boba I think your fifteen minutes are up,” Skywalker called from the back of the room.

Gritting her teeth at the sound of his voice, Rey exhaled through her nose. She and Skywalker had not spoken once since Thanksgiving, other than the required instruction in class. Both seemed to not want to bother with a conversation, knowing their views were not parallel, discussion futile.

“Rey, you are our last piece, care to read it aloud for the group?” he asked, a hint of curiosity in his voice.

This would be the first piece since the beginning of the semester she wrote without Ben’s feedback. Anxiety quelled within her as she cleared her throat. She was not afraid to read; she was afraid to be seen for more than the girl with a mouth. To be seen as broken and a work in progress; a salvageable item only she could fix, because she inherently knew the owner’s manual.

“His usual mask of broody and unstable was an inaccurate way to describe him. Not when the wind tossed his hair askew, and the redness of his eyes shinned scaring in the dim of night. He was fear and confidence intertwined; my fear and confidence.

My faith in him never wavered, not since he listened in earnest to the tale of a girl lost in a forest of her own fantasy. Insecurities only became prevalent when the distance thinned and thickened simultaneously.

He was here, yet not. I desired to be gone, yet there.

Everything I knew, he had touched a life time before me. First steps were never taken together, mine always half a stride behind. Pieces of paper and blotches of ink lived in the fabric of our time. He lived in my stream of conscious and mine in his, our thoughts mirrored each other however not in sync...not matter how deeply we believed we were.

I left our words and promises on the pavement, believing it was time to leave. Leave him before he ever gave an inkling of leaving me. Preservation I wore with pride, felt shear under his dark gaze. Warm brown becoming a dull void as I rejected, rejected, and rejected.

Maybe one day--when my words become fading scars forgotten over time--I'll accept he was the only future I ever felt to be true. To be truly mine.”

She blinked away the burning sensation behind her eyes, finding her throat sore from reading her piece aloud. Her gaze remained on her manuscript, hoping no one was looking her way. Enough of her soul was bared for the day, she didn't need every knowing more of what made Rey Kenobi tick.

The workshop was silent for a moment, before Rose slowly clapped. A few other’s followed her lead, Mara wiping a stray tears from her eyes. Slowly the circle worked its way around with comments, both praising and constructive.

For once she felt welcomed into the fold.

Willing, she took their comments, marking down what she’d use without making a biting comment back.
As the last person finished speaking, Skywalker clapped his hands together. Their time was up.

“Alright, that concludes the end of our seminar. Remember there is no sit-in final for this course, just submit you final draft by next Tuesday,” Skywalker reminded the students as everyone got to work packing up their belongings. “Have a great winter holiday,” he called out dully before turning back to his own seat to gather his papers.

Murmurs of ‘goodbyes’ and promises of study sessions for other classes rang through the room, everyone slowly left.

Just as she was about to head out the room, her professor called back out to her, “Rey, can we speak? There is matter I want to discuss with you.”

Fighting the urge to out-right ignore him, Rey nodded sharply. “Of course, professor.”

Parts of Skywalker’s officer were cleaned out, most of his bookshelves bare. Boxes were stacked high in one corner, R2 curled into a tight grey ball on top.

He caught her eyeline, “I…I decided to leave,” he stated plainly, pausing for a response. In return, Rey said nothing. He cleared his throat, bracing his arms on his desk. “The board didn’t push me to do it. I decided it was time for change—maybe someone new to step in as head of the department.”

Her lips pinched, biting back on a scathing remark. She shifted in her seat, eyes narrowing on him, “What caused it? Not that I mind you leaving; should have happened sooner in my opinion.” He winced at her implications, though did not interject with his unsolicited thoughts. “Why now?”

Shoulders hunching, Luke exhaled through his nose. “Seeing my nephew…it made me realize I caused some harm, and I need to do something about it. He and I need to work through somethings —”

“You’re going to New York?”

“Yes,” Luke answered slowly, “Ben and I already spoke about the matter and he agrees with me. He believes some talking and communicating might do wonders.”

“That’s…very mature of him,” Rey said neutrally, ignoring the piercing pity from Luke’s eyes.

“He reached out first,” Luke explained further, “You…you were right about him. He has changed, and I think having you in his life made him a better person.”

“He-he’s always been better,” Rey stuttered over her words, controlling her emotions into a tight coil, “a good person; he just never understood that because everyone else around him didn’t either.”

“And they’re wrong,” Luke agreed wholeheartedly. He leaned back into his chair with a shadow of regret. “I was wrong—to both you and Ben.”

“You were,” she gritted, fist clenching and unclenching.

Making eye contact with her, Luke became solemn, “I’m sorry, Rey. You deserved better than my class and my instruction,” Bowing his head down, he blinked away his unsettling emotions. “I failed you and Ben. There is nothing I can do to take it back, but to move forward and learn from
“Failure is the best teacher,” she quipped wisely.

Skywalker glanced back to the boxes off to the side of the room, R2 kneading on the cardboard with his sharp little claws.

“I can’t take everything with me and I’m planning on leaving the majority of my books with Leia and Han…” he eyed her warily, almost hesitant to ask. “Would you like to take some? I haven’t read them in ages, might as well give the texts to someone who’d take value and appreciate their insight.”

Swallowing, feeling both relief and disappointment at Skywalker’s departure, Rey nodded. “Sure, I can take some. Need to do something over winter break.”

A forced closed mouth smile tugged on his lips, “Thank you Rey…I think my family would still be very broken up if it weren’t for you.”

“Then what do you call now?” she asked, puzzled how she caused the Skywalker-Solos to all talk again. The men in the family were the most estranged, Leia somehow becoming the mediator of the three. Guilt and misunderstanding seemed to be the antagonist in their family’s unwavering conflict.

“Putting ourselves back together,” he rubbed his hands together mindlessly, as though trying to massage away his inner pain over his family situation. “It will take time,” he concluded.

Standing up without much more to say, Rey went over to the stacks of boxes. Seeing her, R2 jumped off his makeshift bed and down to the floor. She perused for a moment, before deciding on a box with minimal books, slim and binding weathered. Perfect in her eyes.

Picking up the smaller box, labeled *K. Notes/Lectures*, Rey turned back to Skywalker.

Shifting from foot to foot, she regarded him with false confidence, “Is it okay…”

“Definitely, pick whatever,” he shrugged, clasping his hands back together. She gave a close mouth smile, before turning on her heel to head out the door. “And Rey—” She halted at the sound of her name. Glancing over at Skywalker, she waited. “Please…please keep in contact with Ben. I know you two broke up, but he needs someone he can just talk to in his life right now, without any expectations,” he cleared his throat, his blue eyes glistening with unshed tears, “And you were that for him—I think you might have became his best friend without even realizing it.”

“Well, he became mine too,” she answered quietly.

After a brief exchange of ‘goodbyes,’ Rey left, her heart sitting in limbo.

Could they be friends again?

In response she sent a postcard of the downtown stretch, little shops lights unfocused in the photo —

*Keep it. Just keep it until I can get it back in person.*

*Thanks.*
Another Sunday rolled around and Rey found herself sitting with Han watching the sealions.

The two didn’t talk much during these moments, preferring the silence. Every so often she’d speak up, though only to comment on the weather or the sealions. She understood why little Ben liked them so much; sealions were cute and shiny, but barked liked dogs. His little curls were probably coiffed in the wind.

“He wanted to be a marine biologist at one point,” Han muttered, handing his binoculars for Rey to see out. “Ben used to love it out here…”

“I think he still does,” Rey informed Han confidently, “When…when he was here, he’d find excuses to look out into the ocean or the bay. He’d get this—this look on his face, as though he was trying to remember what it felt like to be…I guess in its presence?”

“Sounds like him,” Han shrugged half-heartedly, arms crossed over his chest. “He was always happiest when he wrote and was allowed to put his thought to paper…Luke tried to sharpen and corral him too much to the point…I think Ben didn’t know who he was writing for anymore.”

“You’ve put quite a bit of thought into this,“ she remarked.

He smirked, “When you don’t see your son for a decade, your mind tends to drift to where you went wrong, and how it could have been fixed,” he coughed into his elbow crease, shaking out his shoulders.

A blanket of melancholy covered Rey as she saw the man behind the gruff, wise cracking persona, “You miss him,” Rey stated plainly. Not entirely surprised, but also not expecting Han to be in pain over the matter. He hid it well. “After…not speaking to you for years and him trying his best to leave everyone in the past… you miss him.”

“He’s my son, Rey,” Han sighed, puffs of fog forming in the air from the heat of his breath. “He’s always going to be my son, no matter the circumstance.”

Biting her lips together, Rey considered her next words carefully. Ben told her this in confidence, but…but Han needed to know. He needed to know.

“Ben thought you hated him, after the crash,” Rey admitted, her attention on the sea lions. It was easier talk without facing someone head on.
“I know,” he said, closing up his thermos, “I know, but I only hated him for day and it was after he left. Never for the crash.”

“Oh,” she breathed.

“Though he would never say it in these exact words, but he thinks lowly of himself Rey. Ever since he was a teen—it’s a trait us Solo men have,” he dropped his hands on his knees, rubbing the joints warm, “That’s why we fall for women who know how to put us in our place—both good and bad.”

Another postcard came in with snow falling across the New York skyline a week before Christmas.

Okay. I’ll keep the shirt in a nice, safe place.

Also, Trixie loves those Milk-Bone ones. They’re big enough to fit in her mouth without trouble.

~ Ben

P.S. I read your piece. It is remarkable. Sometimes I think you didn’t ever truly needed my help; you’re talented all on your own. It was I who needed your help.

P.S.S. Does B.B. have a favorite type if chew toy?

“How’s school treating you? Sleeping enough? Eating enough?” Leia asked as she and Rey sat down for their weekly lunch.

While everyone else walked on eggshells around her, or tried to avoid the matter altogether, Leia remained constant.

She was the one who pulled Rey out of her room after the break-up, and forced her to go out to lunch even though Rey claimed she wasn’t hungry and need to focus on homework. Leia kept tabs on Rey calling every so often just to see if she was okay; not in a suffocating manner, but simply checking in on her.

Rey had never experienced overwhelming motherly care; she accepted Leia’s affections, far too afraid to deny the stern yet tender woman.

Picking up the menu, Rey answered her, “Yes, making sure to take care of myself, and I turned in my last written assignment. Just a couple of finals and I am done.”

“Fantastic,” Leia congratulated, perusing the menu as well, “It’s always nice when it gets to that point; some breathing time before the home stretch.”

“Yeah,” Rey mumbled in agreement, “I’m just ready to change my major and move into the next semester.”

“Oh, you decided to change it to,” Leia thought for a moment, before blooming into a proud smile once she remembered, “to journalism.”

“I filed the paperwork, and everything. Luckily some of my classes I have taken can count towards my major. Just means I have another semester here,” she shrugged a little helplessly, “But what can
“I say do what you need to do, and what is best for you,” Leia commented wisely, pursing her lips, “So many people don’t.”

Rey paused for a moment, stunned by the weight in Leia’s tone. The woman was speaking far more of her own family than Rey, if the weariness of her eyes were anything to go by.

“I think I might get the shepherd’s pie,” Rey finally spoke up in the thick silence. She set aside her menu, looking back at Leia with a knowing smile in her eyes, “How is the house going by the way? You and Han still arguing about remolding the kitchen?”

“Dear god, that man will be the death of me,” Leia rolled her eyes good naturedly, “But I love him, no one else I’d rather argue with.”

The sentiment rang true in Rey’s ears. Maybe being with someone did not mean getting along all the time, but working to with each other’s differences and making the most of both their flaws and strengths.

Oddly enough, she missed bickering with Ben over the trivial and thought provoking. There was no one else she’d rather meet toe to toe.

She sent a postcard with a vintage image of the docks—

Anything that make noise. He loves squeaky toys. It will be the bane of my existence.

~ Rey

P.S. Stop being a tortured artist, Ben. I needed guidance and you gave it. We were equals—we are equals. I need you just as much as you need me; get that through your thick skull.

The day after finals, Rey spent at least an hour strolling through Target in an attempt to find a gift for Ben.

They weren’t really talking, but she made a safe assumption they were getting each other gifts based off of how they were both roundabout asking questions. Specifically for each other’s respective dog’s preferences. She already found the treats for Trixie and picked up a elf hat for her along the way. No doubt, the sassy dog would chew it up, but maybe Ben would sneak in one photo before it was inevitably destroyed.

What do you get your short lived ex-boyfriend for Christmas when he only seemed to like books and calligraphy?

Rounding back into the clothing section, her eyes fell on the small Harry Potter section tucked into the corner. It would be a long shot to find anything Hufflepuff for Ben, the poor house continuously forgotten in apparel and merchandise. Though she felt she didn’t have many options on the gift grounds.

Sifting through piles of Gryffindor and surprisingly, Ravenclaw, t-shirts and sweaters Rey began to
lose hope. Several Target employees asked if she needed help, or sent her looks of pity. They knew, everyone knew, if you were digging that deep and searching that thoroughly, your house was most likely not there. She was about to resort to getting him a regular Hogwarts t-shirt or sweater—

Until a peek of yellow shinned in the sea of red and blue. She jumped at the sight, reaching for the piece of clothing.

A freaking *Hufflepuff* sweater—with a hood. A unicorn of a find. She quickly checked the size and felt like crying to the heavens. Throwing the sweater into her basket, she left Target knowing if she was there longer, she’d buy more than she needed.

“I don’t want to leave you alone for Christmas,” Finn whined, hugging Rey tighter than necessary. Awkwardly, she patted his back, sharing an exasperated look with Rose over Finn’s shoulder. Rose rolled her eyes; this had been the fifth time in the last hour Finn had reconsidered their trip. The couple were planning on visiting Paige, Rose’s sister, in New York for the holidays. At one point when they’d been purchasing the tickets a month and half back, Rey was to go with them. To see Ben. For the two to spend Christmas together.

Clearly, that wasn’t happening anymore.

Instead, she was able to get a ticket to her family’s cottage in the country side of England for the New Year. She was beginning to believe the cousin she supposedly shared the estate with did not exist. A mere ploy by her grandfather.

Finn claimed the theory sprouted from paranoia.

Rose did not dare argue.

Han and Leia…they said they wouldn’t put it past Old Ben. He could be a sneaky and conniving bastard when the challenge presented itself.

Peeling Finn off of Rey, Rose shook her head. “I’m sorry for him. Finn and I respect your choice to stay here for Christmas.”

“But no one should spend Christmas alone!” he cried out once more, adjusting his coat sleeves. “You spent so many Christmas’ alone as a child; it isn’t fair for you to spend more as an adult.” Without warning, he flung himself at her again, *PEANUT, I CAN’T LEAVE YOU LIKE THIS!* Finn wailed into her shoulder.

“Get the fuck off me before I kick you out of this apartment for eternity,” Rey gritted out, Finn squeezing her tighter the threat.

“No you won’t,” he gleamed, “I know the bitterness and snappiness is all an act for the mushy girl you are inside!” Finn cheered, bopping her single bun behind her head. She smile slightly into his shoulder; while Finn was a coddling mess, he was not wrong in his observations.

Grumbling, Rey waited again until Rose was able to coax Finn off of her. Once her roommate was already safely out the door, Rey and Rose hugged one last time.

“We love you, and we’ll call when we land,” Rey nodded in their embrace, trying her best not to
become teary-eyed. Pulling away, Rose smiled brightly up at Rey, “And do try to have fun this Christmas—even if it is by yourself. Have a Harry Potter Marathon, try to figure out how to bake, I don’t care—just something.”

“Fine,” Rey answered, crossing her arms over her chest, “I’ll preoccupy myself with something.”

“I…I’m just telling you this because I care. Finn and I care about you so much, and this is just our way of showing it. Worrying about you and pestering too much. Lot’s of people show love that way.”

Rey’s mind flew to her argument with Ben at Thanksgiving—how he worried about her all the time. She was beginning to understand his point of view now that classes were over. For the longest time her mind was solely focused on her school and work; her friendships for the most part were easy and did not require extended amount of attention…until Ben. Yet she tried her best to shove her crowding concern for him into the back of her thoughts, allowing all her other obligations to bury her floundering emotions.

Now she realized how crippling it felt to worry about someone who was never around to see in the flesh. An inherent worry she would not turn off. Unappealing to say the least.

With those parting words, Finn and Rose went on their way to the bus station to take them to the airport.

Crouching down beside her furry companion, Rey became covered with lapping doggie kisses. “Looks like it’s just you and me, BB.” She ruffled him behind his ears and pressed a sweet kiss to his snout. “Let’s see if we can watch all the Marvel movies in one sitting,” she lowered her voice, “But don’t worry we’ll skip Age of Ultron and Thor: Dark World.”

He yipped at her affections, scurrying off to the couch.

A package came a day later, two days before Christmas. Ben’s address marked on the upper left side of the label, her heart inexplicably hammering at the sight. She signed off on the package, and took it back inside her sparsely decorated apartment. Out of the two, Finn was the major decorator, with tinsel and something always baking to create an aroma of hominess.

This year a tree with only sparkling Christmas lights sat in the living room, along with three stockings—one for Finn, BB, and herself—hung by the window.

BB barked happily at the sight, as though he knew the box held something for him as well.

Quickly, to appease her waiting dog, Rey set the box on the kitchen counter. She slashed the tape with her keys, folding open the box flaps. Sitting on top was a dog toy; bird like creature with large eyes. Picking up the plushy, it squeaked.

BB perked at the noise, leaning on his back legs up to Rey. With a smile she tossed the toy out, BB sprinting to the new chew toy.

Turning back to the box, she frowned. A letter sat atop the plainly wrapped gift.

Rey,

I think you need these more than me.
Dropping the letter on the counter, she carefully lift the gift. Sturdy and rectangular, she felt the creases of another box. She ungracefully ripped the brown wrapping paper off, followed by tearing the tape keeping the lid in place.

Inside were two journals, one a forest green and the other a warm burgundy. These must have been the other Vader journals Ben read over the last couple of months. In his haste to leave, he accidently left the twin blue books in her bedroom. She had been planning on mailing them back, however these new additions made her reconsider her choice. The smooth leather cover felt ancient in her hands, Rey placing the two offerings back into the shipment box.

She could look at them later, when she felt ready.

Her eyes then drifted the remained item—an aged manuscript.

_The Scavenger and The Lost Prince_ by Benjamin W. Kenobi

For the first time since before Ben left, Rey cried tears of relief.

Maybe they weren’t entirely lost; they just needed to find a way to truly see each other again. For more than the lost boy and the pained girl.

To see each other as two people who stood side by side, who fought on the same team. Two people who fought for a future _together_, rather than against each other for their own biased illusions.

She clutched the manuscript to her chest, feeling closer to him than she did in their short lived relationship.

Chapter End Notes

**THE MANUSCRIPT AHSOKA GAVE BEN MADE A RETURN!**

I did say it was going to come back ;)

*Flash-Fiction is sort of like poetry. But not. It can have the feel of a poem or be the very short story, the main goal is to have something with a beginning, middle, and end in less than 500 words. It's fun but also VERY DIFFICULT to write.*

And Rey is sorting through something; her feelings, how she acted with Ben, and so on. GIVE HER TIME PEOPLE. She’s twenty-one and had her life flipped upside down, not to mention finals are stressful. She's mentally processing everything and is growing as a person. And Ben is too--he wasn't physically in this chapter, but he has been busy.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated! :D

Love you, bye!
I Think I Can Handle Myself...

Chapter Summary

Ben experiences changes.
He is not sure how he likes these changes.

Chapter Notes

Well, hello again!

After about a three week-month hiatus, I am back with a chapter!

Typos will be fixed later! Enjoy :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So it’s been almost a month,” Amilyn said slowly, sitting on the sofa opposite Ben, “How are you feeling about everything?”

The two were in the living room, loud Christmas music thrumming from the kitchen. Poe insisted on making Christmas dinner for the two, intent on making some traditional Guatemalan dishes passed down his family.

When Ben returned to New York, he and Amilyn resumed their sessions. Over the weeks leading up to his visit to Ahch-To, Ben began to come to sessions less and less. He’d come up with flimsy excuses Amilyn could see right through. His life was spiraling in a direction he did not know how to handle, his pride leading him blindly. Therapy did not seem to mesh well with this new found false confidence Ben adorned.

However, she did not pull him by his ear to attend these sessions. Therapy was for him, only him. If Ben did not want to attend their sessions anymore, she did not have the right to force him or guilt trip him.

He had to make decisions on his own.

And he decided to come back on his own accord.

Back on routine, visiting for two sessions a week for the first couple of weeks.

There was a lot to unpack.

“But not great, but not awful,” he stated plainly, sniffing the cozy pumpkin hot chocolate Poe handed him at his arrival. “I mean, I do think about her—every day—but I’ve been busy. Is it wrong to say it is a relief to not be constantly checking in on her?”
“No,” Amilyn answered him, “As a boyfriend it is not your job to be constantly checking in on her. Yes, communicate and talk, but not coddle.”

Until he hid Rey’s information in his contacts, Ben did not realize how he relied on her. Not so much to make decisions, but relied on her to feel happy.

That was a problem.

Once he came to this conclusion, Amilyn brought back good ole’ listing.

“List everything that makes you happy,” Amilyn insisted, handing over a pad and pen to Ben.

“This is stupid—it was the first time and it is stupid now the second time,” Ben argued petulantly, but took the offered utensils.

“Quite honest today aren’t we?” Amilyn quipped calmly, making a general observation. She leaned back, hands clasped together on her knee. “You don’t have to do it, but you also don’t have to be here. Obviously you are here for a reason, Ben.” She picked up her purple legal pad and pen, “You get what you give in the sessions—you know that.”

“Fine,” he grumbled, “Things that make me happy,” he narrated with a sharp edge in his tone, “Reading—because it is one of the finer things in life and makes you think,” Amilyn did not react, simply watching Ben with a complacent smile, “Calligraphy—because it is relaxing and aesthetically pleasing,” he paused for a moment, the tip of the pen pressing hard into the pad, “and because I spent a long time practicing and perfecting it. It’s satisfying to know I can do it now after all my efforts.” Amilyn remained silent, but gave a nod in acknowledgement. “I guess…pastries?” he asked himself, “they make me happy because the food tastes good?” He shrugged, scribbling it down, for once not caring if his penmanship were illegible. He thought harder about the question—what made him happy? Everything that came to mind was starting to feel superficial or ill-advised. Biting down on his lips, he tried to blank his mind and write what first came to mind… and not be a punk to Amilyn.

- Coffee
- Trixie
- Writing
- Rey
- Mom
- sea lions
- smooth rocks only found in Ahch-To’s bay
- mornings
- water
- dad (?)
- Rey
- People watching
- Walking Trixie
- Baking with Amilyn
- Cooking
- Rey
- Smell of clean sheets
- Pine trees

“That’s all I can think of right now,” he muttered handing off the notepad to Amilyn.
She hummed, placing her crescent reading glasses on her nose. She flipped through the few short pages with little reaction, before slowly circling items from his list with her blue pen.

“You wrote…’Rey’ three times, your dog twice, and your mother once…and you don’t know about your father,” she reiterated from the list. Her lips quirked to the side as her pen scratched out another note.

“Are you going to tell me I’m a pretentious asshole?” Ben crossed his arms over his chest, already defeated.

“No,” She rose her eyebrows, lips pursed, unamused by his self-depreciating comment. “What you wrote is to be expected, because this is also what you value,” she let her words sit for a moment before continuing, “What is not on your list, anywhere, is your journal. Neither of them. What do you think this tells us?”

He blinked, wondering if this was a trick question.

“It…it doesn’t make me happy?” He spoke slowly, not quite sure if it was the right answer.

“Is that a question or a statement?”

“It doesn’t make me happy,” Ben stated more firmly, “It doesn’t make me happy.”

“Now that you know that,” she tore off the list from the notepad, handing it to Ben, “What are you going to do about it?”

“What…what do you mean what I am going to do about it?” Ben asked, squaring his shoulders. “I can’t do anything about the First Order because Kenobi is a stubborn fuck, no matter how amazing his writing happens to be,” he cleared his throat, thinking of how Rey was his only ticket to getting in genuine contact with the man. Unfortunately, that route was not a viable option at the moment. “The Knight of Ren—they need a leader and they wanted me to do it, and I came up with the idea so I feel some responsibility for them.”

“Have you published anything with them?” Amilyn asked, her pen moving against the paper fluidly.

“Personally, no,” Ben admitted. “Phasma has edited and posted some work from some up and coming writers and we got a few hundred subscribers because Mitaka is a genius with this stuff,” he huffed into his hands, “It’s growing, and everyone else is enjoying it—immensely.”

“Are you enjoying it, Ben?”

A simple question caused an uncomfortable shift inside Ben.

“No…I—I don’t know what I am supposed to be doing in this—configuration,” Ben floundered for a moment, his hands flailing. “I came up with the idea, and I feel like I need to be in charge of it because of it,” he huffed, dropping his head into his hands. Groaning, he rubbed tiredly at his face, his unshaved scruff rubbing harshly against his palm. “But—but I hate being an editor. Yeah, I’m fucking good at it, but I hate it.”

“Why do you hate being an editor?”

Once again another simple question sent him into a tizzy. With a deep breath, he centered himself as decently as he could. Which was horribly.
Blindly, he reached for one of the pillows on the sofa. He held the blue pillow tightly to his middle, the weight adding some poor excuse for comfort.

"Because—because I know I can write what their writing better. Far better than the garbage I am given, and I have to sit there and read it and try to give constructive criticism while I have all these other, better ideas swimming in my head!" Ben grumbled heatedly, his knuckles going white from his grip on the fabric, undoubtedly destroying the filling in the pillow. "It’s frustrating, because I feel helpless. That I am stuck in this cycle of being an editor and never a writer because that is the hole I was pegged into by everyone. At this point, I don’t think I can ever be the writer I want to be because—because"

"Ben, breathe," Amilyn’s melodious voice chimed in, "Stop. Take a deep breath, and once you catch your breath, you can continue." He listened to her instructions and followed through, "Now, you were saying you don’t think you can ever be the writer you want to be. Is writing what you want to do with your life?"

"No," he said immediately, shifting back into autopilot. He paused, reconsidering everything he threw out, all the pent up insecurities he kept in his chest. "Yes…” he trailed off, not quiet sure if he even had an answer.

"Okay," Amilyn nodded, setting down her legal pad. "It’s okay to not know—you just need to know you don’t know."

His eyes burned behind his glasses, his vision blurring. "When will I know?"

Amilyn sighed; her first vague instance of emotion since they began digging deeper. "I don’t have an answer for that, Ben." Picking up her tissue box, she passed it to him with an understanding smile. "But I believe you will figure that out for yourself soon."

And he did.

“I’d like to step down as editor-in-chief ,” Ben informed the group at their next meeting. They’d all gathered in Ben’s apartment; no one commented on the sudden gathering of plastic totes and boxes littering the main living area.

"What?" Paige blurted out, eyes blown wide in panic. Beside her, Phasma remained stoically silent, lips pursed in thought.

Meanwhile, Hux appeared completely unphased. "I want to say I am surprised, but I’m not. You heart wasn’t in it,” he commented with a sneer.

"Oddly insightful of you Armitage," Paige remarked bitingly, not even able to give a tender compliment to Hux. The two were constantly at odds, water and oil in their personalities.

The ginger rolled his eyes, “I’ve known Solo for years—he’s the biggest softie around. You should have seen him in our Regency Literature class at university,” he gagged with half effort disdain. “Gushed over all the romance, and wonders of the female heroine. Not surprising you fell for girl
similar to Austen character.”

The table became eerily silent at the subtle mention of Rey.

The Knights of Ren knew Ben and Rey broke up, though only knew what had happened in the vaguest terms. Except for Mitaka. The poor soul knew everything from both ends.

The former assistant cleared his throat, “We respect your wishes—”

“This is not because you are heart broken, right? Because honestly it is the most dimwitted reason to quit,” Phasma finally declared, eyeing Ben sharply. “Pour your anger into your work and then succeed. Simple, Solo.”

Licking his lips, Ben scratched at the scruff growing steadily on his jaw. “Uh, no. My break-up with Rey only forced me to face what I have ignoring about myself. I am not happy—I don’t remember the last time I was happy, and trying to hide in my work or in a relationship was not going to solve the problem,” he admitted sternly, adamant about his decision.

There was no going back on this matter. For a few days, Ben sat with his conclusions and reminded himself leaving The Knights of Ren wasn’t running away. Nor was it an easy solution—an easy solution would be remaining stagnant in his role. Being complacent with being unhappy, and possibly leading his co-collaborators in the wrong direction with this ill mindset.

Leaving was the healthiest solution for all parties involved.

“As I am stepping down and ultimately departing, all I ask is to be included as one of the founders and,” he glanced around at the ashen and pinched faces of his…friends, “for Mitaka to take over my position.”

All eyes fell on the scrawny man, Mitaka gazing back like a deer caught in head lights.

“Really?” Hux and Mitaka utter simultaneous in various ranges of disbelief.

“Yes,” Ben handed over his binder full of notes and information to Mitaka, “He knows how to run this, and has been essentially running this fledgling journal since its inception. It is only right he continues and hold the appropriate title.” He smiled genuinely at Mitaka, clapping him on the shoulder, “You’ll do good. I believe in you.”

Mitaka smiled back.

Of course, once handing off duties and roles occurred, Ben found himself needing address his bigger problems.

Such as his living situation, job, and well…his family.
“Dude, you know Amilyn and I love you, but you cannot crash on our couch until the New Year, right?” Poe remarked, passing by Ben’s slumped form in the room on a Thursday morning. “You’ve been here for almost a week. Just move into your mom’s; isn’t it there for you?”

Squinting at the blurry vision of Poe, Ben reached for his glasses. He frowned up at the charming man. An ugly twist in his gut moved at the mention of his mother.

“I am trying to not rely on my mother for everything, especially since I feel pretty awful about Thanksgiving,” he mumbled wiping at chest and collar for any dried up drool, not find none. He ignored the painful twinge in his chest at the lack of discovery.

Titling his head to the side, Poe stared down at his unwelcomed guest, “Well now it feels like you are relying on Amilyn and I to house you, and it was cool for like a day,” Poe scoffed, “But now it feels like there is an overgrown child in our house and I don’t like it.”

“Poe, leave him alone,” Amilyn called out from the kitchen, “He is my godson, and if he needs somewhere to live, my door is always open!”

“He is also one of your clients and that has some ethical dilemmas right their, Lyn,” Poe shot back, heading into the kitchen with new purpose.

Huffing, Ben threw his blanket over his head, suddenly feeling sixteen again.

Maybe Poe had a point.

The smiley face pancakes Amilyn made Ben mocked him, the raspberry syrup smile dripping into a grimace. His godmother had been making his smiley faced pancakes for the last three days; perhaps this was her own way of slowly kicking him out of the house instead of verbally telling him.

“Your mother called me,” Amilyn began as she served herself coffee. “She mentioned she needed the rest of her belongings shipped and that you started that before you left for Ahch-To.”

“Yes,” Ben muttered, cutting aggressively through the smiley face. “But I haven’t stepped a good real foot in there since I came back.”

“Yes, I know…” Amilyn remarked dryly, “and I think maybe to move forward with your own move, you need to take care of your mother’s room.”

“I…” Ben huffed, dropping his utensils, “I agree. I do agree.”

“Thank god,” Poe cheered from outside the kitchen. “I thought we’d never get rid of you!”

Lips pursing, Ben looked back at Amilyn. “You really like this guy?”
She nodded, “I do,” she shrugged, “I know, it stuns me too.”
And so he packed, and actually moved into the house. Like he said he would.

“Yes, mother,” Ben grumbled into the receiver, “I did pack your collection of Stevie Wonder records in bubble wrap.”

From across the room, surrounded by rolls of bubble wrap, Poe snickered. Ben sent him a stern glare.

“I already sent your winter coats they should be there any day now,” Ben continued to iterate as his mother listed off items over the phone.

She probably had a list in front of her, checking off and scribbling what Ben forgot.

He paced the rooms, most of which were relatively empty. Except for his bedroom and the extra guest room. Some kitchen appliances remained tucked away, along with his mother’s printer and television.

She claimed it to be pointless to pay for airfare on item Han would tear apart or ruin in ten seconds flat.

In the dining room laid Ben’s own corner of boxes. Untouched since chucking them into the house less than a week ago. Never had Ben been so grateful he lived on a month to month lease, able to get completely out of his apartment before December fully came crashing in. However, he occasionally needed to go back to his mailbox, not all bills and mailings switched over to his new address in the quick move. He picked up his mail the previous day, but did not have the time to look through the postage.

“Mom, how about I call you once everything is shipped, hmm?” Ben interrupted his mother from more badgering.

Luckily, she accepted his offer.

Huffing, Ben began to shuffle back into the living room where Poe continued to seal up the remain boxes.

“I swear it is never ending,” Ben declared, dropping his phone on the sofa. His sofa; he’d been able to sell some of the furniture Leia did not want on Craigslist, allowing Ben to move in his own belongings. At first opportunity his mother’s uncomfortable leather sofa and armchair were gone. He had enough stiff necks from both to obtain a personal vendetta against the furniture.

“It means she at least cares a little,” Poe chuckled, stacking up another box.

Ben grunted, not quite agreeing, but giving the benefit of the doubt.

“Thanks for helping by the way.”

“Sure man, anything to get you going again” Poe shrugged, rubbing his arms. Crossing and then uncrossing, as he looked around the living room, with no particular focus.

Charming Poe Dameron was not a Fidgety Poe Dameron, the sudden awkwardness in the room
raising a red flag for Ben.

“I uh, actually wanted to talk to you about something—it’s kind of why I offered to help,” Poe admitted, stuffing his hands in his pockets. “Ya know, be able to talk without Lyn around.”

“I knew it was too good to be true,” Ben muttered under his breath, Poe a good earshot away.

“Well,” Poe cleared his throat, crossing his arms over his chest once more. He stood taller, his head held higher. “Amilyn and I have been together for a while,” Ben nodded for him to continue. Poe released a heavy sigh of relief, “and I am planning on proposing.”

“Oh,” Ben uttered lamely.

He did not expect that. He thought Poe and Amilyn were the type of couple not invested in the institution of marriage. Apparently he was wrong.

“But, but I wanted your blessing first, since you are one of the most important people in her life.”

Ben blinked.

He never really considered himself a major part of Amilyn’s life. Just the boy she took care of; an honorary family member. Yes, she repeatedly told Ben he was important to her, yet he foolishly believed it was because she felt she needed to cushion him. Cushion his emotions, remind him he was ‘important’ and ‘mattered’. All the therapy words and soothers.

Or she was merely acting out of the kindness of her heart.

However, she cared what he thought. Poe asking Ben for his blessing was evidence enough.

Ben swallowed shakily, “Of course you have my blessing,” he answered. “Despite you being—well you—you make Amilyn happy, Poe.” He chewed on his upper lip for a moment. “And she deserves to be happy.”

“Huh,” Poe murmured, “That was easier than I expected. Maybe you’re not all grumbles and darkness.”

“Uh, thanks.”

By the following afternoon, most of the boxes containing Leia’s belongings were gone. Officially, the house was left to Ben and his trusty, faithful furry friend Trixie.

To commemorate his first meal as the ‘owner’, he and his dog ate in the living room. Chinese take out laid across the coffee table along with piles of mail. The dining table too long and empty for Ben to eat there all alone.

A rectangle-squarish shape captured his attention, Ben reaching to the bottom of his mail stack to retrieve it.
The firm paper of a postcard bent slightly in his grip.

A simple picture of the Ahch-To docks laid before him. Dread loomed in his gut; was this from his father, or uncle, or who ever else decided they needed to reach out to him. Flipping the card over, Ben’s heart stopped.

In familiar sloppy, loopy scrawl was—

_Hello from the other side._

~ Rey

The loop in her ‘y’ dipped lowly, her signature rushed. As though she lose the nerve to write him if she did not act fast.

Well, she was far braver than him. The first to reach out, to make an effort.

_You are making an effort. You are doing what she asked._

Yet, the words caused a twinge of boyish acknowledgement, a kin to a crush being noticed.

With heavy steps and a lighter heart, Ben placed the postcard on his fridge.

His fridge would become home to all her postcards. It added character to the kitchen. Made it his own.

With some pushing and shoving, Ben found his prime writing spot.

The sunlight hit just right through the guest bedroom window, the small garden landscaping his view. Ultimately he decided the room would be his study, while his mother’s former study became the guest room. Afterall, his mother’s study felt too large and spacious for him. His mother study had long windows facing the street and built in cabinets. Which were nice—but they were not Ben’s. Everything in the room held his mother’s distinct mark of professionalism and class. A style he appreciated, but found to be too stuffy for his liking.

He couldn’t work in the environment, Poe even suggesting Ben find a nice window in the house to claim as his “writing corner”.

Ben actually listened to him for once in his life.

A simple sturdy table was shoved against the wall where the bed once would be. Beside him, cluttered in a teetering stack were his reference books. Walls remained relatively bare, except for a few of his favorite calligraphy pieces. An antique forest green desk lamp sat in one corner of the table, a relic of his grandfather’s. A Hufflepuff mug sat in the other corner, holding an array of pens and pencils for writing. His calligraphy pens were stashed away in a safe book on his shelf. His chair was old, something he found in the basement as he scavenged for more furniture and boxes to donate or sell.
Everything was mismatched, but it felt like a home. More than a home than any other place felt.

Well, other than Rey.

But that was a different type of home entirely.

Sitting down on the creaking chair, Ben pulled out his pocket notebook.

He began to write.

Not to be *cliché*... but she became his muse. Even in her absence.

Memories seemed to be louder and poignant when alone.

Or maybe he remember everything from a new perspective knowing these were all he had to cherish.

He found her shirt.

The one she mentioned in her postcard.

*The Cure.*

Black fabric faded into a greyish shab. The image of the iconic lips kept its integrity, while the rest aged well into a love article of clothing.

He could picture her wearing the shirt, the sleeves an inch or two too long, hanging awkwardly on her shoulders. Yet undeniably breathtaking in the band t-shirt because she loved it and wore it with pride. A bright smile illuminating the room...

He folded the shirt neatly and tucked it under his pillow.

Sometimes in the middle of the night, he’d hold the cloth close to his chest. Hands white as he gripped the shirt for dear life.

It was the only thing he possessed of hers. He didn’t keep hard copies of her manuscripts. He didn’t write love letters. He didn’t even save half their emails when they first began their exchanges. It was almost as if their relationship did not even exist.

Which was not true—he had the emotional scars and life ramifications to prove it—however he had nothing to prove it. Except her shirt.

He missed her in the simplest sense.
“It was cathartic throwing out everything,” Ben spoke openly. He rubbed at the scruff growing along his jaw. “I did not hold any sentimental value for most of what was in the house—it was all things my mother accumulated while we were out of contact.” His nose scrunched up. “It kind of made me realize she’s a hoarder.”

Amilyn hummed, closing her notebook. “Do you have any other closing thoughts?”

“What?”

He glanced at the clock on the wall—it was fifteen past four.

“Ben, you went over time and I have a dinner with Poe I need to get ready for,” she reminded him lightly.

“But I never go over time—I go under time,” Ben argued, puzzled at the time glaring back at him.

Sighing with a gentle smile, Amilyn shrugged, “Well, today you did, not to mention you’ve been reaching the time limit every time. I don’t even need to bribe you with scones anymore.”

Ben flushed, hunching in on himself. He suddenly felt too big and awkward for the room. “I still want the scones—”

A trill of laughter left Amilyn, “Of course, of course,” she waved to the door, “I have some in the kitchen. Please help yourself, but I need to excuse myself to get ready.”

She stood up from the sofa, Ben following after her into the kitchen.

“Hey Amilyn,” he called before they went their separate ways, “I hope your dinner goes well.”

She narrowed her eyes conspiratorially at him, “Hmm, thank you, Ben.”

Nodding once, she went up the stairs. Ben smirked; he had no doubts he’d be receiving a phone call later that night about the good news.

His nights now had a new pattern.

Late night calls to a girl with bright eyes and editing bland manuscripts for a journal he loathed were of the past.

Nights were now alone. Though he found being alone was not terrible; he spent most of his adult life alone.

Ben would get back home from his latest session at five in the afternoon. He’d then make himself a modest dinner. He was trying to root himself in healthy habits, those falling to the side when life became hectic with the First Order, then the Knights of Ren, and trying to balance a relationship along with these factors.
Now he only had himself to focus on, and no one to please with his choices. Growing up and for most of his adult life, Ben did not have the freedom to simply live to his liking, far often concerned of other’s views and thoughts of him. Trying to form and morph into a mold he could never fit.

It was strange—but a good strange. A liberating strange that somehow cause a subtle sense of euphoria.

Once dinner was made, Ben would eat at the table, classical music playing the background. He was working his way through Mozart, the various renditions and arrangements. Dishes would then be washed once done, Trixie would be fed, and Ben would pick a book to read.

This week was *Jane Eyre*.

Sitting with Trixie, reading a worn and loved copy of the novel, Ben immersed himself in the world of Jane. Her narrative and discovery.

He did not hear his phone ring the first time. Nor the second.

But he did hear the third, Trixie’s bark mixed among the jingle he set years ago. After one to many missed calls and late sessions with Amilyn, Ben got into the habit of putting his phone on sound and setting alarms to not loose sight of time as he wrote.

Picking up the phone, he swiped to answer the unknown number.

“Hello Ben,” a tired, haunting voice spoke on the other end.

His blood ran still before rushing to his ears in hypnotic waves.

“Uncle,” he croaked, his mind reeling.

A moment of silence.

Then a heavy sigh.

“Can we talk?”

Biting hard on his cheek, Ben muttered, “Of course.”

He set his book down, feeling the tension bunch in his neck the longer he held the phone. Inhaling deeply, the tension eased.

It was just Luke.

It was just *Luke*.

*It was just Luke.*

It was just…his uncle.

Sitting forward, Ben listened intently as apologies poured from the receiver.

Quietly, he set the call on speaker and closed his eyes. The earnestness of Luke’s voice felt tangible in the empty room. The phrase “I’m sorry” did not come up once nor did anything of the likes.

Instead— “I failed you.”
And—“You are more than I ever gave credit. You deserve more.”

Somehow these confessional words meant more because his uncle was admitting his faults. A rare occurrence.

“…I want to fix this. Tell me how to help you, kid.”

Ben licked his lips; he’d regret this but…a fresh start with perspective might save him. Might save Luke.

Or maybe not. However, Ben knew how to control his frustration and Luke knew not to provoke the beast.

Sitting tall, Ben answered confidently, “I’m writing a book…”

He was trying to be supportive. Being supportive was easier than he anticipated.

Maybe he was being too negative to realize this.

“…I liked the loneliness in the beginning,” he answered before clearing his throat, “I was able to

“It’s lovely,” Ben smiled at Amilyn as she bashfully showed him her engagement ring.

“How you help him pick the ring?” His godmother eyed him carefully, dropping her hand back onto her lap. “Because I don’t think Poe would know to pick a amethyst gem stone for the ring. He’s not very detail oriented.”

Ben squirmed a bit in his seat, a shoulders gradually bunching up to his ears in a less than casual shrug.

He scratched behind his ear, leaning his arm against the back of the sofa. “I mean I might have suggested the stone.” His head tilted to the side, “Might,” he restated slowly.

“You are too good sometimes, Ben.” Amilyn smiled in understanding, continuing before Ben could interject. “Yes, you are—all that Solo heart,” she jabbed her purple pen towards his chest, “balances the Skywalker brain you have. Count it as a blessing.”

He didn’t try to argue against her.

Sessions worked best when he wasn’t self-deprecating. Positivity was key to making progress.

At least, that’s what Ben constantly reminded himself.

“You mentioned,” Amilyn flipped through her notes, “How your feel ‘cooped up’ in the house? Can you tell me why?”

His grin faded fast, Ben slouching in on himself. Reaching blindly, he grabbed a pillow and held it firmly to his abdomen.

“I…I liked the loneliness in the beginning,” he answered before clearing his throat, “I was able to
write all the time, finally piece together all the segments and sections of my novel but…” He scrubbed agitatedly at his eyes. Tiredly, he dropped his chin into his palm, jaw twitching. “But I don’t have a routine beside our sessions and caring for Trixie, and I have been able to save up money yet someo—” He exhaled sharply, “Something is missing.”

Her pen tapped idly on the page, her half-moon glasses perched higher on her nose.

“It sounds like you need a job.”

“I know,” Ben mumbled, “But what? It needs to be something with flexible hours, decent pay, preferably not a desk job.”

Desk jobs came with a routine Ben did not want to find himself cycling back into. If he wanted to improve, he could not fall back into old habits. A comfortable and secure desk job, that would keep him busy. It was not a solution, but digression.

Amilyn hummed for a moment before her eyes became alit at an idea, “How about you substitute?”

“No,” Ben declined immediately. “I don’t do kids,” he sneered, his nose twitching.

“Wait Ben,” Amilyn hushed, leaning forward in determination, “Think about it—you can make your own hours, you don’t have to work every day, but it gives you enough routine and a decent income. I always did believe you had a teaching spirit.”

He grimaced, sitting with his shoulders back, considering Amilyn’s points. “Yes, but… kids. And don’t I have to get credentialed?”

“You need a certificate and your finger prints done, which shouldn’t be difficult since I can call in a favor,” Amilyn assured him, already writing down a note into her planner to contact her favor, “It will take about a week, but I think it will be good for you.” She folded up a paper with a phone number, handing it over to Ben. “His name is Ackbar, he can provide you with some information on the certificate and a local elementary school to provide your services.”

Begrudgingly, Ben took the paper, “For the record, I am doing this for the money. Nothing else.”

“Of course, Ben.”

Luke moved into the guest room a week and half after their phone call.

There wasn’t grandeur in his arrival, but mere agreements. Luke would pay partial rent while he stayed with Ben, and also care for Trixie when Ben would be at work. Furthermore, Luke needed to keep his comments on Ben’s writing only during their designated meeting times. Editor and writer needed to be left at table once they ended the conversation, instead focusing on being nephew and uncle. Or some semblance of the relationship.

“This is… this is really good, solid work you have here so far,” Luke commended, taking off his reading glasses. He put the typed papers together into their formally neat stack. His pen clicked
open and close, before making a note on his legal pad. Resting his chin on top of his clasped hands Luke eyed the pages, “This is honesty fantastic work to build on, some edits will need to be made and fine tuning for the storyline but…I’m excited for this.”

Ben crossed his arms over his chest, regarding his uncle carefully, “You’re holding something back—that was way too easy.”

Luke sighed, dropping his forehead down.

“Okay, I do have one major concern,” he sat up, making direct eye contact with Ben, “How are you going to find an ending to this?” Ben’s eyebrows rose at the blunt question, “Because everything feels extremely authentic, which is wonderful Ben, you have a natural talent for finding emotion. However, I am making a bold assumption on this being more autobiographical than originally anticipated.”

Ben did not initially respond, hung up on how his novel somehow became more about him and well…her.

“It’s…it’s not completely about…ya know,” he huffed dropping has hands on to his knees. “I wrote about other things…” Luke waited patiently, a natural frown drooping down on him, “But I can see your point and—and concern.”

“Have you talked to her?” Luke asked calmly, leaning back more comfortably in his seat.

“Rey?” Ben uttered stupidly; who else would Luke be referring to? “No.”

“What not?”

His lips parted to answer, yet nothing came out. Instead, he smiled tightly.

“She wanted to break up—we broke up,” he stated simply, “There is not much else to it.”


Ben’s mouth formed a flatline, bemused by the comment. “Why do you say that?”

“Because you wrote half a novel on your friendship,” his uncle waved the manuscript towards Ben, “She was the first and last person you spoke to in the day, she made you think, she helped you relax, the conversations you wrote,” Luke dropped the manuscript down in awe, “—those are ones you experience with special people. The one’s you know are going to be there forever no matter what. They are essentially our soulmates—”

“Dear god, no,” Ben groaned, turning his head away, “I get that you believe in mysticism and all that spirituality type mumbo jumbo—but I don’t. People come and go uncle; out of anyone, I thought you would have known that best.”

Luke pressed his lips together stoutly, observing Ben unabashedly.

“She wrote about you.”

Ben’s head shot up, his chest airless at the implication. “She what?”

“Rey wrote about you for the final piece in the seminar,” Luke said, “—she audited the class.”

“Oh,” Ben breathed, relieved.
“She’s hurting too,” Luke spoke quietly, empathy evident for his former student, “There is
this…loneliness about her. I know she’d always been alone, but never lonely…like she is missing a
piece of herself.”

Ben tried not be ignorant and think the piece was him. Rey had an entire life outside of him, he was
merely a guest in her orb of obligations and schedules. A shadow in her waking memory.

“I know the feeling you’re talking about,” Ben answered slowly, almost afraid to admit his inner
thoughts aloud. “I’m fine with being alone too. There is nothing wrong with it, but…just because I
am fine with being alone, does not mean I like being lonely.”

Her postcard and letter arrived a couple of days later.

Shakily, he read her words—

…My faith in him never wavered, not since he listened in earnest to the tale of a girl lost in a forest
of her own fantasy…

…First steps were never taken together, mine always half a stride behind. Pieces of paper and
blotches of ink lived in the fabric of our time. He lived in my stream of conscious and mine in his,
our thoughts mirrored each other however not in sync…not matter how deeply we believed we
were…

…Preservation I wore with pride, felt shear under his dark gaze…

..I’ll accept he was the only future I ever felt to be true. To be truly mine..

Ben never knew she felt so…unsure yet completely sure in their relationship. Insecurities she
desperately attempted to hide suddenly became clear on the page.

She was scared and…felt inadequate beside him. A desperateness clawed within him to hold her in
his arms and never let go. To whisper sweet words and love into her hair until she understood he
never wanted them to part, and she was more than a girl trying to catch up with him. She was…is
his equal in every way, maybe even his better half.

Carefully, he folded her words away and tucked them into his bedside table drawer. Safe and
preserved.

Picking up the postcard, he felt himself smile.

Things were getting better. Ben needed to somehow let Rey know.

Reply to her postcard just needed to be the first step.
Going through several boxes from his hasty move, Ben finally found what he was looking for; Benjamin Kenobi’s original manuscript for *The Scavenger and the Lost Prince*. Ahoska had given him the manuscript along with several of Anakin’s journals. He’d been lost on what to do with the manuscript of his and Rey’s favorite novel, especially once more news of Kenobi began to surface. Ben was too nervous to read the original manuscript, knowing how personal the words and notes could be. He felt he did not have the right to look through a living man’s words. At a loss Ben did not know what to do; did he return the manuscript to Kenobi if they were to ever meet? Did he keep it since it was technically a gift to Vader?

Now, Ben knew who needed the manuscript most.

With good intention, he wrapped the delicate manuscript carefully, and placed the journals containing information on Winter Kenobi Jacobs dutifully inside the box. Rey deserved these words more than him. Ben could not give her the world, but he could give her clarity.

Maybe it would be enough to bridge their self-foraged gap.

“Are you sure you are good?” Amilyn asked again, as Ben repositioned his pillow on the smaller sofa.

For Christmas, Amilyn and Poe insisted Luke and Ben stay at the house for the night for a real family Christmas gathering in the morning. It felt childish, but Ben knew the couple did not have many relatives, and the ones they did speak to were out of state. The couple were on a high from their engagement, trying to pull others into their orb of happiness. If Ben spending Christmas with the two made them happy, well… it’s not like he had other plans.

“Amilyn, seriously, if I find it uncomfortable, I can sleep on the floor. It is not a big deal,” Ben assured her. He’d been kind enough to let Luke take the more comfortable, bigger couch in the living room, while Ben made camp in Amilyn’s office on the ‘therapy’ sofa.

Honestly, he was waiting for her to leave to build a makeshift bed out of pillows and blankets on the floor.

“Okay,” she huffed, “But let me know—”

“I will,” Ben nodded, “Now leave so I can sleep,” he ordered petulantly.

His godmother chuckled lightly, heading out the door, “I get the hint—I’ll leave, but,” she turned back around to Ben with a motherly smile, “I am happy you are here, Ben, and I am so proud of you.”

With those parting words, Amilyn left, turning off the lights on her way out.
Once out of an earshot, Ben threw down the mountains of pillows in the room on the floor, followed by the blankets. He shoved both the armchair and coffee table away a few inches to clear more room, knowing he was going to need more room than the little square-foot between each piece of furniture.

Packing down his pillow, Ben heard his phone ring from the sofa. He reached over easily, frowning at the number blinding back in the dark room. It looked familiar, but he didn’t have a name attached to it.

Hesitantly, Ben swiped to answer the call.

“Hello?”

“Ben,” her voice breathed into the receiver. “I got your package…can—can we talk?”

He shut his eyes, feeling her voice cover him in a blanket of warmth.

“Of course, Rey.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, lots to unpack! Ben experienced some major growth and had a few revelations.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers! :D

Also, thank you to everyone for being understanding of this hiatus! I needed a break from this fic, for both my sake and the story's sake.

The fic is in its final stretch and several parts are already written! Only about seven more chapters to go.
Chapter Summary

Ben and Rey talk about nothing we actually want them to talk to about. But they talk.

Chapter Notes

HELLO!

Here is the next chapter!
Typos will be fixed later.

ENJOY!

NOTE: Addiction (drugs, alcohol) is mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

---

Packing down his pillow, Ben heard his phone ring from the sofa. He reached over easily, frowning at the number blinding back in the dark room. It looked familiar, but he didn’t have a name attached to it.

Hesitantly, Ben swiped to answer the call.

“Hello?”

“Ben,” her voice breathed into the receiver. “I got your package…can—can we talk?”

He shut his eyes, feeling her voice cover him in a blanket of warmth.

“Of course, Rey.”

~

Rey felt her throat go dry as he said her name.

As weird as it was, she missed the sound of his voice. Not so much the timbre or baritone of his voice, but the conviction of his words. Not a syllable was said without some once of passion or purpose, even if the combination of his speech often betrayed him.

He tried to say what he meant, however grave it turned out to be.
“Rey—you wanted to talk?” His question rattled her out of her thoughts.

“Uh, right!” She chuckled hesitantly over the line, her feet pacing the length between the kitchenette and the dining table. “Talking! Yes, that—that is why I called you.”

She swallowed, letting another bout of silence fall between them.

Her eyes drifted to the journals—she read them front to cover despite her initial irreverence towards the content of the leather bound books.

She knew more about Vader than she ever wanted; she knew more about her mother more than she ever dreamed.

While Winter wasn’t the best person—reckless, selfish, hotheaded—Vader took great care to give her the benefit of the doubt in his own recollections. Little was mentioned about her father in the writings, not that Rey expected much, but she found Vader regarded Winter as family despite her unintended cruelty towards her adoptive family.

Her mother’s desperate need to find belonging forced her to find means to create fantasies in her mind. Unfortunately, this became her own undoing.

Winter was an addict. Rey was too young to clearly remember, but Vader’s words brought the reality she attempted to hide—a defense mechanism to save her own young, fragile psyche. Drugs, alcohol; vices to allow Winter’s mind to become numb and lost in its own bearings.

Both her mother and father addicts despite their pleasant appearances in photos.

Rey didn’t cry—but she felt a sense of her preservation gone. A blanket ripped from her, forcing her to accept the cold facts she desperately ignored.

Instead, she needed someone to talk to. Not about her parents or about the journals. No, just someone to talk with, to feel less lonely on one of the most celebrated familial holidays of the year.

Immediately, her mind latched to Ben.

Not even considering how it was past two in the morning in New York, or how it was official Christmas, or how her Chinese take-out dinner was laying out, cold, on the coffee table—Rey called Ben the reality of the situation not coming into full force until she heard his voice.

“How—I—Did you see A Christmas Story, it’s a uh, playing for twenty-four hours on some cable channel?”

Her face scrunched; seriously, that was all she could come up with after not speaking to him for a little over a month? She felt pathetic whenever it came to Ben. Or maybe it was more so her feelings for Ben.

Which unfortunately, only increased in their near silence and postcard exchanges. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder, despite all its clichés.

Clichés are clichés for a reason because they are somewhat true.

God, why did Ben need to be right about matters of the heart?

“Yeah, actually,” he answered her absurd question. “Poe forced us all to watch a few hours ago. I thought it was kind of funny, I mean I grew up watching it every Christmas so…”
A dead silence fell between the two, Ben’s confusion tangible.

“I saw it for the first time actually. I now understand the reference of ‘you’ll shoot your eye out,’” she chuckled lightly, pacing a track into her apartment floor.

From the couch, BB tilted his head at her, the little hood of his doggy sweater flopping to the side. He too was worried for her wellbeing.

“My Dad gave me a bb-gun for my seventh birthday,” Ben spoke softly, “and I had seen the movie enough to know I was too much like Ralphie and would screw up shooting a bb-gun.”

Rey stopped pacing, unable to help picturing a little boy with Ben’s dark loose curls struggling to aim. He must have worn glasses at the time too; he seemed like someone who’d been plagued by bad eyesight his entire life. “And did you?”

“No, of course,” he said, a breath of laughter lacing his voice, “I am Han Solo’s son. Do you really think I would miss?”

“Well…” Rey stressed, “I do know you—”

“I am athletic and a decent shot, Rey,” he argued bluntly.

“I mean, I know you are athletic! I just—I keep seeing bookish Ben trying to be rugged and then failing.”

“Thanks,” he remarked dryly.

She was just making a twat out of herself now, wasn’t she?

Scrubbing her forehead with the meat of her hand, Rey huffed. “I…I didn’t call to offend you or even talk about A Christmas Story.”

“I figured as much,” Ben said clearly, sounding closer than across the country. “Remember, I also know you, and usually you need an ice breaker.” Closing her eyes, she could picture him shrugging slightly, almost halfheartedly at the little fact of their lives. “Apparently insulting me is your go to ice breaker, intentional or not.”

Rey groaned lightly at her own stupidity, hugging a near by pillow to her abdomen. Crossing her arms over herself, she adjusted the phone firmly by her ear. Licking her lips, she decided to speak up again—however it did not go unnoticed by her how patient Ben sounded on the line.

He didn’t speak to fill the silence, nor did he pepper the air with concern.

Silent and listening to her gain her bearings.

“Have you ever felt like—” She squeezed her eyes shut. Blinking away the sting in her eyes, she cleared her throat. “Do…do you ever wish that you lived a different life?”

“All the time,” he said with stern conviction.

Rey flinched. “That was quick answer.”

A complacent sigh echoed over the receiver. “Well, you are asking me who has fucked up more time than I can count.”

She nodded, before grimacing at the realization Ben could not see her. “True and valid statement,”
she said honestly, finding zero grounds for arguing against his personal observation.

“I mean,” Movement from his side of the line sounded over the phone, as though he were struggling to get comfortable. “I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t change anything because then I wouldn’t necessarily be who I am if it wasn’t for my experiences. But the thought has crossed my mind on especially shitty days.”

“That is awfully insightful of you to say,” Rey said, picking at a loose thread on the pillow with her free hand. “You…you wouldn’t change anything?”

A moment of silence passed between the two, Rey awaiting an pour of regret from the man who carried his scars like a well-worn coat.

“I would not change anything.”

Relief and pain mixed oddly in her gut at his honest response.

“What brought this on?” Ben asked, “Not that I don’t love discussing potential material for an existential crisis, but clearly you called me because something is bothering you.”

Chewing on her lower lip, tossed aside the pillow and sat up straight.

Closing her eyes and taking a deep breath and spoke.

“I read the journals and I—I think I told myself all my life that my parents were going to come back for me, that they were going save me from this life I live, even when all this evidence continued to crop up proving that my childish fantasies were just that— fantasies.”

Her head dropped, forcing herself to take deep, steady breaths.

She did not need to flip out on Ben. She did not need to spill out all her emotional clutter of child abandonment on to him, no matter how easy it was to do so with Ben.

For some reason, he was the only one she could involuntarily shared more of herself with; she opened up, Ben getting her to speak with a simple stare or dry quip.

Honestly, it was terrifying discovery for Rey.

With a mildly shaky hand, Rey set the phone down on the coffee table and put Ben on speakerphone. Her hands were getting too clammy to continue clutching on to the device for dear life, as though she’d be able to pull Ben though the telephone and into the room with her.

Rubbing her hands on her thighs, bunching up her Slytherin pajama bottoms at the knees, Rey leaned forward.

“Well, aren’t you going to say anything?”

“I’m not going to say anything to make you feel better,” Ben defended, “I don’t have the right words to comfort you—”

“I don’t need you to comfort me, I need you to just talk,” she insisted, frustratingly tying her hair up in a sloppy bun. “Talk about—I don’t know! How Hux is a moron, or how Poe is obnoxious— something you saw in the subway! If Paige and Phasma hooked up— anything!”

Ben huffed tiredly, Rey sitting on the edge of her seat. Subconsciously, her foot bounced up and down, her panicked energy being released.
“Er—I don’t know how Hux is doing. We stopped speaking roughly three weeks ago when I stepped down from the Knights of Ren. Poe is as obnoxious as ever but he honestly isn’t the worst since he is going to be my godmother’s husband, and I was thrown for a loop with that last question—Really Phasma and Paige?”

“Sexual tension oozes from them—and completely doesn’t matter right now—you quit the Knights of Ren?”

Jumping up from the sofa, BB yelped at her from the other side. She hushed him with a wave of her hand. Once again her feet began to lead her through out the apartment, this time circling the coffee table. Quickly, she picked back up the phone, keeping him on speaker.

“Yes, I did,” Ben answered easily, “I needed to make some changes in my life and one of them was leaving the Knights of Ren.”

“But I thought you loved it, you even brought Mitaka along to work on the journal when you visited,” Rey insisted, recalling how the two worked together for large chunks of the day, however begrudgingly. Ben and Mitaka’s work ethics might not mesh well but they had similar visions. That’s what mattered right?

“I hated it Rey—I was in so deep I didn’t even realize I hated it,” Ben sighed.

Needless to say, she was confused by this turn of events, “You made it sound as though creating your own journal was everything you ever wanted—”

“I know because I want it to be, but just because you want something to be doesn’t mean it actually is,” Ben countered heatedly. A light, scolding groan sounded on his side of the conversation. “I’m sorry—I just—it’s been a long month of therapy and changes and just figuring out who the fuck I am—”

“You’re Ben,” Rey declared, “You are Ben with all your flaws and heart and intellect to balance the craziness you feel.”

A breathy chuckled left him, “Amilyn said something similar.”

“ Probably more articulate than me who is constantly making an prick of herself.”

“Oh, definitely,” Ben agreed without missing a beat.

Rey could not help but smile at his remark.

She was glad Ben could not see her now.

After some mindless wandering as she spoke, Rey found herself in the kitchenette. She needed to do something instead of pacing or squeezing pillows with all her might. Setting her phone down on the counter, Rey got to work on making herself hot chocolate.

“But, that’s good you are making changes for yourself. Ones that you want to make, of course.”

“Right,” he uttered, “All that self-care does wonders.”

She squinted at the phone as she struggled to open the new can on coco powder. “I feel like that was sarcastic.”

“It kind of was, it kind of wasn’t. I haven’t decided yet,” he said casually. “I’m okay with not
“Now that is character development,” Rey praised, finally popping the plastic lid off the can. Finding one of the remaining spoons in the drawer, she began to scoop coco powder into her mug. “And you said Amilyn and Poe—”

“Getting married, yes.”

“Well, I guess it is a good time to say Finn is planning on proposing to Rose on New Year’s Eve,” Rey announced with forced joy, dropping more coco than necessary into her mug. She’d have to warm up more milk to balance the coco to milk ratio; she could live with such decisions.

Ben tsked lowly. “Wow, look at them mature.”

“I know, what morons.”

“I second that.”

A pregnant pause fell between the two.

Maybe it was best to drop the conversation on proposals, all things considering.

Turning away, Rey opened her refrigerator, plucking the almond milk out. Turning on the electric stove, she moved the sauce pan on to the correct burner instead of haphazardly in the corner.

“Are you…are you moving around?” Ben asked, puzzled at the noises on her end of the line.

“Yes, I’m making hot chocolate,” Rey poured almond milk into the pan, “It’s late and cold. I will do what it takes to feel cozy.”

“Ah, slightly envious,” Ben grumbled.

“Why? What are you doing?”

“Trying to get comfortable on the floor.” Shifting and rustling fabric came through, Rey able to picture Ben struggling with blankets and pillows.

He was not great at sleeping still, let alone getting comfortable long enough to sleep.

“Why are you on the floor?”

“Amilyn wanted Luke and I stay the night and me being the wonderful nephew I am gave Luke the couch,” he told her, an edge of annoyance creeping into his tone. “Let’s say I am starting to regret my decision—”

“I thought you said you wouldn’t change a thing,” Rey quipped, harkening back to their earlier topic.

“I don’t think sleeping on a couch or on the floor qualifies as life altering decisions, Rey,” Ben remarked, unamused by her cheekiness.

“Of course it does; butterfly effect, Ben. Killing a butterfly can alter an entire universe—”

“How much sci-fi have you been watching recently?”

“Enough to know the word ‘quantum’ means absolutely nothing because it is mention in every sci-
film in existence,” Rey replied, picking up her nearly boiling milk.

Carefully, she poured the liquid into her mug. Chocolatey warmth permeated the air, the tension in Rey’s shoulders easing at the sensation.

Ben harrumphed morphed into a halfhearted chuckle midway, “I’m pretty sure quantum is a word—haven’t you ever heard of quantum physics?”

“I am a journalism major—of course I have, but does that mean I understand it? Of course not.”

“You changed your major?”

His question broke the casual, almost normal pretenses in the conversation.

“Yes, I did.”

She tried her best to remain calm, for some odd reason believing Ben would be upset she changed her major. Rationally, she knew Ben would support whatever decision she made. Still, irrational fears loved to entangle themselves into her confidence. Afterall, Ben was the person who helped her become a better writer, helped her improve for months before their relationship spiraled into something far more than mentor and pupil.

“Well, I think journalism might be a perfect fit for you,” Ben spoke up, his voice firm in the compliment, “Your nonfiction pieces were always well complied and assertive once you figured out your topic. I’m glad you are doing something you want to do.”

Rey released a sigh of relief.

“Thanks,” she smiled towards to phone.

“That’s a shitty opinion—”

Ben huffed, “I don't think it is necessary. I like the original—”

Setting her empty mug aside, Rey leaned back into the couch. BB scurried to sit on her stomach, chewing on his leg for a moment before curling into a warm little ball.

“It wasn’t a remake! It is a continuation.”

“So a sequel—”

“A continuation,” Rey stressed, “Not a sequel! And you do not have the right to have an opinion on a film you haven’t even seen yet!”

“I am going to need to be dragged by my ears to forced to see the new Mary Poppins,” Ben declared, with a slight slur in his voice. Sleep must have been ebbing at him; his responses had been coming slower and less biting the longer they spoke.

They’d been talking about trivial matters for about an hour. Somewhere along the way, they found themselves on the topic of the new Mary Poppins film. And Ben being a lover of older films, was firmly against the continuation.
“I can have that arranged, Ben. I have enough reinforcements on the East coast to take care for such matters,” Rey warned, half-jokingly and half-serious.

“I know, I know,” he mumbled, mid-yawn, “I just…if I’m going to see it I’d rather see it with you.”

Rey did not know how to respond…mostly because she felt the same way about several matters. Not just going to the movies, but doing simple things. Some to just be with, or take to a wedding or event. Just someone to be hers…and she wasn’t an idiot—her person was Ben, but the circumstances were simply not right.

Not the right time.

Not the right moment.

Not the right them.

Speaking to him seemed to only prove her opinion further.

They were both in the middle of their growing stages, jumping into something more than this tentative friendship would be a sure fire for catastrophe. With the little he shared, Ben appeared to be in a good place, but not anywhere near to being confident with the changes orchestrating his life at the moment.

“Eh, I made things awkward—let’s just forget I said that and talk about—”

“No,” Rey interrupted his haste apologies “No, its fine.”

“Okay,” he breathed, “Can I admit something then?”

“Sure.”

“I miss you,” he said shakily.

Biting her lip, Rey felt tears well up in her eyes. Blinking, she forced them away by sheer will.

She was tired of crying over their predicament. She’d prefer to start moving forward with…whatever this relationship was; a friendship, a romantic relationship, companionship?

“I miss you too.”

Neither spoke. Instead, remaining on the line until the other fell asleep.

“Christmas service? Never pegged you as being overly religious, uncle,” Ben commented as he observed Luke the following afternoon.

In the morning after some breakfast and pastries, courtesy of Amilyn, Ben and Luke trekked back to the house. Due to his phone call with Rey, Ben only slept a couple of hours before being ushered awake and cajoled into more festivities.

Apparently, the Christmas celebration continued for Luke, who was dressed nicely in a suit and green tie and button up shirt.
He frowned at Ben, “I have always been Catholic, Ben.”

“Practicing?” Ben rose an eyebrow.

A hum of something sounding oddly similar to ‘no’ came from his uncle.

“Maybe I am having some ‘coming to Jesus’ feelings,” Luke shrugged, his coat jumping up with his shoulders. “No pun intended.”

Ben trudged further into the kitchen, picking up a mug along the way to the coffee pot. He began brewing a full pot once they came back home, Ben knowing he needed to get some writing done despite the holiday. Caffeine was slowly becoming a close companion, less and less creamer being poured into his coffee.

“Did you know your grandfather, Anakin, was Catholic?” Luke informed Ben pleasantly, as though Anakin were not a touchy subject.

“Yes, I did know. I was at the funeral,” Ben said bluntly, his back turned to his uncle as he poured his coffee. “I did not know anything of the religion, but I knew enough.” He paused for a moment, considering his options. Best to discuss the matter while Luke was on a time crunch; if things got bad, his uncle could flee to his engagement rather than stay in the house while anger levels were on the high. “…I don’t want to argue, but I need to know—why did you and mom hate him so much besides the obvious of being an absentee parent?”

A wave of exhaustion cascaded over Luke, the man’s chipper attitude diminishing at the question. However, Ben did not stand down.

Pursing his lips, Luke leaned forward on the breakfast nook. “I did not hate my father—I forgave him despite everything and we did in fact have a decent relationship. Like I’ve said, I pushed for you to meet him. For you to know, Ben.”

Turning around, Ben tried his best to keep a poker face. A futile attempt, his every emotion knowing how to display itself on his malleable face.

“Ben you need to understand,” Luke started slowly, shaking his head, “I hope you understand, Anakin always put his career first. Once my mother died, his wife, he threw himself into his work to the point he did not know how to do anything else—be anything else.” Standing taller, Luke stared Ben straight in the eye and continued speaking. Their eye contact a lifeline, begging for Ben to hear him out. “Anakin gave Leia and I up, before even knowing us or trying to be a father. Leia went to friends of our mother’s and I went to distant relatives. It was easier for me to accept because I knew the people raising me were family but not my parents. Your mother on the other hand,” Luke wiped his mouth, looking grave as he spoke his next words, “She did not know she was adopted until she was older, and she had to figure out how to handle that information…for her it was easier to be upset at Anakin rather than forge a relationship because she didn’t want to get hurt.” A tired laugh escaped Luke, a knowing smile edging on his lips, “Leia is a lot like Anakin, more than she’d ever acknowledge…and I think she might regret not knowing him.”

Swallowing tightly, Ben rested back against the kitchen counter, holding his mug tightly. Looking back, Ben could pin point the similarities between his mother and his grandfather, especially personality wise. Hot-headed, acted on their own personal will, too smart for their own good…workaholics.

“But…but he is unbelievably different in his writing and different when I knew him,” Ben argued, the image of his grandfather not converging well with the image of this stern, workaholic, secluded
man his uncle and mother painted at every opportunity.

“Because he was different, Ben,” Luke agreed wholeheartedly, his voice softer, reminding Ben of the tender Uncle he grew up with. “He was different because of you,” his uncle stressed lightly, “Anakin tried to be better and more involved when you were born. Your mother and father decided little contact would be best because neither wanted you to get hurt the same way.”

Part of Ben understood his parents good intentions. Another part of Ben was frustrated with his parent’s stubbornness.

However, a somewhat rational side—a side making more appearances than usual as of late—knew his parents were trying their best. Horribly so, but they tried in their own way.

Sensing Ben lost in his thoughts, Luke called out to him, “Kid, your grandfather loved you. We all love you, even when you can’t see it.”

“I know,” Ben croaked.

Glancing at his watch, Luke’s eyes widened, “Oof, need to go. Service starts in a half hour. I’ll pick dinner up,” he announced, heading to the front door. Ben didn’t stop him, believing his uncle shared enough for a holiday afternoon.

Taking his mug with him, Ben whistled for Trixie. The two left for Ben’s study, his mind brewing steadily with this new perspective.

Two hours into writing, Ben’s phone began to buzz to life.

Rey’s number flashed across the screen.

Ben turned to Trixie, his eyebrows raised, “Should I answer it?”

Trixie blinked back up, not responding.

“I mean I shouldn’t, even though I want to,” Ben continued, watching the phone out of the corner of his eye, “Last night was a fluke, and we didn’t really talk about anything.”

Trixie barked, reaching up to him.

“Was that a ‘yes’?” Well, if you say so,“ Ben conceded hurriedly, swiping the phone before the call ended. “Uh, hi,” he greeted awkwardly, his haste making him far more nervous than he anticipated.

“Hey, are you busy right now?” Rey asked immediately, “Because I am watching It’s a Wonderful Life and since you are the only old film nerd I know, I thought you’d want to watch it along with me?”

Ben hesitated for a moment, his gaze lingering on his still blank page. He’d been staring at his notebook for over an hour, unable to find the right words to fill the page.

“Yeah…I can watch a movie right now,” he agreed, standing up from his desk. “I’m assuming you’ve never see the film.”
“Never,” she confirmed.

“It’s a tear jerker for most,” Ben warned as he walked through the hall into the living room, “Are you sure want to watch it alone?”

“I am not watching it alone; we are watching it together, like old times,” she countered enthusiastically.

“Old times was three months ago,” Ben remarked, plopping down with couch. Trixie hopped up beside him as he reached for the remote.

Rey ignored the comment, instead veering into a different topic altogether. “I also wanted to say thank you for talking with me last night and listening and—” She huffed exasperatedly over the phone, “I feel awkward getting all personal and serious over the phone, can we switch to video call real quick?”

Ben swallowed, not expecting her to make the request. “Uh, sure—”

“I mean if you don’t want to it’s totally fi—”

He tapped the icon on his phone, the screen instantly showing Rey’s ceiling and her half up bun sitting lopsided on her head.

“Oh shit, you already switched it over.” Fumbling with the phone a bit, she adjusted the phone landscape and set the front camera to face her.

Dressed in pajamas and wearing her glasses, Rey gave him a large grin. Her exhaustion was evident by the deep and dark circles under her eyes, yet the calm glow in her eyes stated otherwise. She was feeling better, or at least feeling a natural positivity, if she seemed happier. After a moment, she relaxed in a softer smile.

“Hi,” she breathed.

“Hey,” he said back, a hand flying up to rub behind his neck. Shrinking in on himself, Ben smiled back sheepishly. “You look great by the way.”

She convulsed into barking laughter, her body swaying a little out of the camera, “Okay that is a fucking lie because I have been wearing the same pajamas for three days straight.”

“At least you wear them well,” he complimented, a snort punctuating his sentence.

Through the video call he noticed the telltale signs of Rey becoming flustered; constant shifting, a dusty blush on her cheekbones, and wide pupils.

She squinted, leaning forward to the screen. Briefly he caught only glasses and part of her forehead before she leaned back away. “You-you’re wearing the sweater? The Hufflepuff sweater?”

He glanced down at himself, realizing he was indeed wearing the sweater Rey gifted him for Christmas. Another string of chuckles came from Rey, Ben fixing his glasses on impulse and sitting taller.

“Yeah, I like it. The inside has a soft lining.” He shrugged, playing with the cuff of his sleeve, his thumb fiddling with the lining.

“Ah, then I made a wise choice,” she nodded in satisfaction at her find.
“Yes, you did,” Ben agreed with a little eyeroll, knowing Rey to be occasionally smug about little victories. He'd give her this one.

“You also grew out a beard,” she observed, pursing her lips. “I…am not sure how I feel about it to be honest.”

“I like to call it the self-care beard,” Ben informed Rey in a extremely serious tone, one she apparently could not take seriously whatsoever by the her raised eyebrow. “I was moving and sleeping on Amilyn’s couch for a week, so I didn’t shave. This then made me come to the conclusion that I did not need to shave, and I only shaved because work, but now I am technically self-employed. I am now officially on the recluse spectrum with being a writer and living in an old house on the East coast. So why not complete the recluse look with facial hair?”

“Huh,” she uttered, a considering frown forming on her lips. “That’s one way to look at it.”

“Also I look my age with the beard and less like an exhausted man-child.”

“Okay, now that seems to be the real reason,” Rey remarked with a knowing smirk. After a moment, her gaze soften, then look away. “Ah, the movie—do you have your Netflix up?”

Looking away, Ben picked up the remote again, clicking to the Netflix home page, “Yes, I am now.”

“Let’s start on twenty? Sound good?”

“Yes,” Ben agreed, before resting his phone against a pillow beside him. He found the film easily, on his watch list at the top of the screen. “Did you know the film was nominated for five Academy Awards and did not win any despite it being considered one of the best holiday films for decades?”

“See? This is why I wanted to watch it with you; I don’t have to Wikipedia or IMBD a thing when you already know everything off the top of your head!”

On his phone screen, she scrambled to get comfortable before propping her phone on a surface in front of her. Glancing back at the phone, she smiled brilliantly at him.

Suddenly the distance between them felt shorter.

He smiled lightly back, “By the end of this, you will know more about Frank Capra than you ever wanted.”

“Bring it on, I am ready to be educated!”

Chapter End Notes

So...some important conversations happened and we finally got an answer--YES, BEN DID GET HIS HUFFLEPUFF SWEATER AND HE LOVES IT :D

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers!

Also, updates will be once every other week! I got some other projects going on both fanfic and personal life that need some delegated time. And to also assure you all--I
have written one of Rey and Ben's reunions (yes...they will have multiple for reasons we will discover in the next chapter) and it is sweet. Like actually sweet. There will also be a time jump coming up as well.

Come say hi to me on tumblr @intp-slytherin97

Love you, bye!
“Amilyn,” Ben knocked lightly on his godmother’s office door, “Can we talk for a moment?”

The lilac haired woman’s head popped up from the bridal magazine she was perusing, a bright purple pen clutched between two fingers. Several magazines and cut outs were stacked neatly on the coffee table, color coordinated sticky notes thumbing out.

A smile tugged on his lips at the sight of Amilyn going into full bride mode; a day no one saw coming except for maybe Ben.

“Well of course, Ben,” Amilyn said, dropping the magazine in her hand on to the cushion beside her. “What’s bothering you?”

She began to reach for her notepad.

“Uh, you don’t have to take notes. It’s nothing therapy-note worthy.”

Raising an eyebrow, Amilyn nodded her head to the side and dropped the notebook back in it’s place. “If you say so.”

“I’m sure.” Ben chuckled, taking a seat in his usual spot. However, he sat closer to the edge of the cushion, leaning his forearms on his knees. Squeezing his hands together, Ben took a deep breath and began. “Amilyn, I think we both know it is time.”

“Time for what?” Amilyn asked back, narrowing her eyes bemusedly.

Inhaling through his nose, he made eye contact with her, “For me to find a new therapist.”

“Oh,” she blinked owlishly behind her half moon glasses. “I did not…I am surprised. I thought you were enjoying and growing from our sessions.”

“I am, I honestly am, “ Ben assured her, “But I think it might be best for me—for us—if I stop seeing you as my therapist.” Before she could further question and possibly cause Ben to second
guess his decision, he continued with his thought-out explanation. “You have been a great help and I think you were the therapist I needed when my life became a shit-show.” Amilyn smothered a snort at his remark. “And I will always be thankful when you agreed to stop your retirement and —”

“Ben, I would have done it if you asked or not. Your mental health comes first—”

“And see I can’t come first anymore. You’ve always put me first in our relationship, and it’s time for me to put you first.” Ben stated, ignoring the crack in her voice, “I want you to be able to enjoy putting together your wedding and all your other fifty million projects without having to squeeze in time for our sessions or constantly becoming Therapist Amilyn when we are out of the office.”

“Ben, I’m always going to worry about you,” she said with a motherly sigh. “But,” she pointed her pencil at him, “I do see your reasons. Do you at least have another therapist lined up?”

“Yes,” he clasped and unclasped his hands together, remembering the anxiety of trying to find another therapist. “His name is Dr. Ezra Bridger, he specializes in mental health and Jyn says he’s great.”

“Jyn Erso?”

“Yeah, she apparently went to therapy when she was still living here and recommended Dr. Bridger when we were catching up the other day.”

Along with spending more time on writing and mending his relationship with his uncle, Ben had done his best to keep in contact with Jyn and Cassian. The two were his closest friends before their move and understood him more than he ever gave them credit. He’d go as far and say the couple considered him family, Ben simply struggling to see the healthy and reciprocated relationships in his life.

“Well then, I think I will need to email Dr. Bridger my notes,” she said with a smile, a glisten in her eye “Best he knows everything so you can get the best help.”

He silently watched as she began to gather her notes and forms, standing up from the sofa.

“Auntie Ami—” Ben called out, sounding like a young boy rather than a grown man. “Just because I am not your client any more doesn’t mean I won’t visit. It just means I’m here because I want to be here, and that should be enough…I just…I want to be your godson again.”

Dropping the paper’s down on her desk, Amilyn came over to the sofa and wrapped Ben in a warm, eclipsing hug.

“Oh, my boy,” she murmured into his shoulder, “it is enough and you will never stop being my godson.” She pulled away, holding his shoulders. “You understand that right?”

Throat closing up, Ben nodded mutely.

“Good, good,” Amilyn spoke between choked back tears. “Now since that is all out of the way, you can help me start planning my wedding!” Reaching over she grabbed one of the stacks and handed the non-sticky note infested collection to Ben. Turning to Ben, she blanched. “My god, I’m getting married,” she chuckled jovially, “I never thought I’d say that.”

Shaking his head fondly, Ben hesitantly flipped open one of the magazines, “Do you have any idea what you want?”
“No and neither does Poe, that is why you need to help us.”

“Oh, great,” he muttered, pushing his glasses up his nose. For someone who randomly proposed to the love of his life a month earlier, Ben did not realize how many shades of ivory existed.

“Would you rather have fifteen feet of hair or be bald?”

“What type of question is that?” Ben gapped on the screen, disgust and judgement oozing from his eyes.

Balancing the laptop awkwardly on her chest and stomach, Rey titled the camera down slightly for Ben to see her better. “It is a very serious and important question.” Ben did not look amused, returning back to whatever he was doing. From her angle she could see him flipping pages, squinting and frowning. “Come on,” she sang, “answer the question.”

“I’m not an idiot, I would rather have fifteen feet of hair than be bald!” Ben declared matter-of-factly. “Have you see my face? There is a reason why my hair is longer; it doesn’t look that great without a frame.”

“I like your face,” Rey defended, earning a bemused eyebrow raise from Ben, “But I am relieved to hear you’d go for the hair than be bald,” her nose scrunched, “I think I would stop talking to you if you went bald.”

“That’s too much of a shallow statement from you,” Ben said with a snort. “You’d still talk to me, be seen out in public with me on the other hand…”

“I’d buy all the hats in the world to cover your head.” With her right pointer finger, she crossed her heart. “I promise!”

“Awe, my hero,” he teased, flipping another page. “How about you—fifteen feet of hair or bald?”

“Oh, definitely bald,” she said without a moment of thought.

“What?” Ben sputtered, “You’d go bald?”

Lifting the laptop off her body, Rey sat up on her bed. “Uh, yeah.” Ben remained lost on her reasoning. “I think I can pull off a Stranger Things Eleven-esq look. Plus I’d save money on shampoo and conditioner—oh my god, I should go bald!”

“No!” Ben dropped the magazine on the couch, eyes wide and wild. “No, no, no I like your hair, your hair is great—”

“No!” Ben dropped the magazine on the couch, eyes wide and wild. “No, no, no I like your hair, your hair is great—”

“Were not dating anymore—you don’t get a say on my hair.”

Ben rolled his eyes. “I never had a say on your hair even when we were dating! But I am your friend and I can tell you this—you will regret shaving your hair off!”

“But, see you will still talk to me and be seen in public if I was bald willing,” she shrugged, “So if one of us had to be bald, I’d take one for the team.”

A resolute sigh left Ben, the conversation of hair and balding effectively over by the quirk of his
lips and stilted expression. Flipping another page he groaned.

“Take a guess how many shades of purple there are,” he grounded out.

Picking up her mug of coffee, Rey shrugged. “Are we speaking on abstract terms or within a specific context? Because the number is infinite if the context is abstract.”

“In a swatch book.”

He waved said book in front of the laptop camera, then brought it back for perusing.

“Take a guess, any number.”

“115.”

He looked up sharply, hair flying in his face. “That was oddly specific and correct.”

“I have sixth sense,” she stated proudly, “Also is says it on the front of the book—‘Over 100 shades to choose from.’” He flipped over the cover, an aggravated growl escaping him at the sight. “Fifteen was just a lucky guess.”

“I have been looking through this swatch book for a matching shade of these,” he held up a pair of lilac earrings, “Because these are the exact color Amilyn and Poe want for the entire wedding. Ivory and lilac which is just a very pale purple.”

Rey winced. “You were the one who offered to help.”

“I thought they meant being moral support, calling the venues, finding an officiant—not discerning shades of purple.” He tossed the swatch book aside, “Forget it; I’ll find it later.” Slumping slightly out of sight, Ben huffed. “I never want to do the whole big ceremony—just want to show up, sign a paper, and kiss. That’s it.”

Rey pursed her lips. “If it’s any conciliation, I never thought I wanted to get married, so I find the whole thing bizarre. Being engaged, the ceremony, the everything…If you love someone, and can picture them by your side every day, you should just go and get married.”

“You are talking about elopement right there,” Ben mumbled. “Did you picture me by your side?” He asked before he could stop himself.

Realizing what he said, he immediately began to back pedal.

“Shit, fuck—ignore me. Completely ignore what I said—”

“I don’t know.”

His frantic protests halted. Squinting at the screen, Ben gazed at her as though she held a candle in the dark. Rey tried not shiver at the intense longing in his dark eyes.

“I don’t know—when you asked me to marry you—I didn’t know if I could,” she took a deep breath, “If I could like or handle the idea of being married. Even if it was you—especially if it was to you.”

“We don’t have to talk about this,” he offered. “We don’t have to ever talk about this if you don’t want to.”

“No,” Rey said, pressing the matter, “No, we do and we should. It’s been the fucking elephant in
the room for the last week.” Her shaky voice did little to ease his nerves. “Like I said I didn’t know—I didn’t know if I could see myself with anyone forever, because no one has stayed forever. Everyone leaves—”

“Rey—”

“And I didn’t know if I could handle it if you inevitably left—”

“Can we please stop talking about this—”

“So I pushed you away before you can leave, and it was dipshit move but I am a survivor. I know self-preservation like the back of my hand, and it was the first thing my instincts told me to do! And I realize maybe I do—”

“Rey—please.”

His broke ‘please’ stopped the spinning of excuses and reasons flying from her mouth.

She felt better, but clearly she made him feel worse.

Ben blinked blearily at her, chewing hard on his upper lip. His eyes were bloodshot, his body slightly hunched over, folding in on himself.

“Sweetheart,” his voice cracked, “I love you, but I can’t talk about this right now.”

“But…” Her next words died out, feeling weight in her chest the longer she watched him.

“You might be ready, and that’s great—that’s really great—but I’m not. And when I am ready,” he chuckled sourly at himself, “when I am ready, I don’t want to have this conversation over Skype. I want to be with you, in person.” He exhaled roughly, his shoulder shaking. “That’s all.”

“I didn’t mean to—”

“I know.”

A quaking silence fell between them. Neither moved, the sound of BB’s snores and Trixie’s panting from their respective lines echoed in their wake.

Swallowing, Ben looked back up to where she remained staring.

“Ah—when does your flight leave tomorrow?”

“Five in the morning,” she answered, suddenly feeling more tired than she did moments ago. “I should probably be heading to bed, long day of travel tomorrow and what-not.”

“Right,” Ben nodded, “It’s like already ten in California, you should probably go to bed.”

While both were in agreement over the time and the need for sleep, neither made a move to hang up the videocall.

Squeezing her eyes shut, Rey smiled tightly. “I’ll have spotty reception at the Manor, so this is kind of goodbye for a few days…but I’ll try my best to get in contact.” She blinked her eyes open, noticing he wasn’t staring back like usual. Instead, Ben refrained a response, focusing intently on his fidgeting hands. “So…love you, bye.”

Not waiting for him to say it back, Rey ended the call.
A few seconds later her phone buzzed.

Ben

Love you, bye

“Crying over a girl won’t solve your problems.”

“Thanks for those astounding words of wisdom uncle,” Ben said dryly into his coffee.

Luke shook his head, cutting up more strawberries for the fruit salad. Begrudgingly the two men implemented a routine of eating breakfast together every morning, something Ben both appreciated and detested. These mornings usually included bickering, eye rolls, and unsolicited ‘words of wisdom’.

The only great thing about breakfast with his uncle was Ben did not have to make anything except for the coffee.

“Just think, she is flying over the Atlantic right now—”

“Technically she is probably flying over Colorado right now,” Ben corrected, referring to the time difference his uncle seemed to love to forget existed between the East and West Coast. “And I am not crying over her.”

“Then wallowing,” Luke punctuated with a stern chop of the cantaloupe, “Wallowing over her while she is living her life is counter intuitive,” Ben groaned into his cup, not in the mood for his Uncle’s psychoanalyzing him. “You always get like this after you two talk—”

“Because she constantly wants to have this heart to heart, and I can’t bare my feelings to her over a videocall.” He scrubbed the scruff on his chin, making a mental note to do some trimming. “And it’s weird because we are in this limbo where we both know we love each other and we kind of acknowledge it—but we do nothing about it.”

“I thought you wanted that,” Luke questioned, popping a grape in his mouth. “You two needed space or some banthacrap like that—did you know your parents do the same thing? Take a break, come back together, take a break, come back together; it’s a never ending cycle, some are just longer than others.”

“That’s does not make me feel better.”

“It shouldn’t; it should make you want to be better,” Luke raised his eyebrows, waving to Ben, “Why don’t you just tell her everything you told me?”

“Because it is not that simple!” Ben huffed, crossing his arms over his chest.

Shaking his head, Luke began to toss the salad. “I’m just saying it’s not fun seeing you like this when there is a very simple solution.”

“Can we talk about something else? Like the fact you said you has something to tell me before you blindsided me with this Rey conversation.”
Frowning, Luke hummed in thought. His eyes then lit up, remembering what he’d been planning on telling Ben.

A cunning grin emerged on his uncle’s mouth, Ben mildly unsettled. “Guess who wants us to visit his hermit old self after some marvelous guilt tripping and maybe a tiny bit of blackmail?”

Ben felt his stomach drop.

“Are you fucking kidding me?”

“Um, excuse me?” Rey examined the printed out email once more, making sure she had the correct directions and area. She was the only passenger to get off at the rural station in Scotland. Despite the deserted post, Rey did not expect there to be more than a few passing faces on this route, this her third time taking it to her family’s ‘estate’. “I’m am supposed to meet a Q. Jinn, he is my ride to the Knight Manor,” she asked the woman sitting at the booth in the train station.

The woman blinked at her, pausing her raunchy novel reading to peek at Rey. She glance out the window, “You mean him?”

Right outside, a tall, elderly man with a page boys cap on his head stood. The grim line of his mouth warned Rey of impending news.

Nodding once to the woman, Rey gripped the handle of her suitcase and left the overhead structure.

“Miss Kenobi,” Q. Jinn greeted, his Irish drawl more welcoming than his long face.

“Mr. Jinn,” she grinned back, “Long time no see, how is everything?” she asked with a singing taunt.

Jinn was not one for small talk, but for some reason he tried with her. And Rey took advantage for a minute or two, or until Q. Jinn grunted about small talk. He’d been taking care of the Knight Manor for years, before Rey even owned a piece of it, maintaining the house twice a week as the keeper. He was courteous enough to give Rey a ride to the country-side home during the holidays.

“I have unpleasant news,” he said, disregarding her question, “We will need to stay at the local inn for the night as we have other travelers coming in the morning.”

“Other travelers?” Rey rose an eyebrow, “I thought—”

“Your grandfather invited them,” Q. Jinn elaborated, bowing his head at the mention of her estranged family member.

“Ah, I see,” Rey muttered.

“He will take care of the expenses, it is simply too long of a day’s travel to do twice here and back in a twenty-four hour turn around,” Q. Jinn said apologetically.

“I understand,” she assured him. “Waiting another day to get to Knight Manor won’t kill me.”
A down pour came through the night and into the morning. And then stopped, followed by picking back up mid-day.

Ben was quickly learning winters in Scotland were damp and windy. Not to mention his reception was shot and Rey’s as well, Ben unable to reach her for the duration of his travels.


“I miss this; I should move back to the UK,” his uncle murmured.

“I support you whole heartedly,” Ben grumbled, pulling his hood further down on his head. His windbreaker billowed as he fought to button it up, but was able to get to the top buttons as they waited for their ride. “I only ask you stay in New York until I get published.”

“Ha,” Luke deadpanned, “I knew you were using me.”

“I never kept it a secret,” Ben stated plainly. Looking at the road, Ben could make out a little spec moving forward. Dread rooted itself inside his gut, swaying from foot to foot to relieve the tension.

“Remember the plan—get him to sign the papers ASAP and get out of there.”

“You see,” Luke dragged out, sparing Ben a wiry small glance, “My plans don’t coincide with your plans. I want to catch up with the old bastard.”

“You can catch up in purgatory,” Ben bit out, “I don’t want to be here longer than necessary because it increases my chances of seeing Rey and I am not prepared for that. I need another year of therapy before I am ready to say, ‘Hey, let’s meet up in person and hash it out’.”

“Yes, because the beginning of all beautiful relationships start off with ‘Hey, let’s hash it out’,” Luke mocked, giving Ben a small pitiful frown.

“You are not helping,” he replied stiltedly, shivering violently at a sudden gust of wind.

The dark car rolled up to a stop a couple of yards away from Luke and Ben. From the driver’s side, a tall man came out, walking slowly towards the two. Picking up their luggage, nephew and uncle met the driver a little more than halfway.

“’Ello,” he welcomed, “I’m Mr. Jinn, Mr. Kenobi sent me.”

Luke grinned back, shaking the man’s hand while Ben merely nodded in greeting. As his uncle began pleasantries, the men falling into talk about the weather of all things, Ben rolled his suitcase to the car. The loose gravel and dirt made it difficult to trek, to the point where Ben simply picked up the suitcase by the side handle to carry.

As he came closer, he noticed someone in the backseat. Assuming it was Kenobi, Ben paid little mind to greeting the man, allowing his uncle to make introductions later.

However, he did not expect the backseat door to be flung open when he was five steps away. Ben reeled back, catching himself before falling back first to the ground.

“Ben?” The British lit voice haunting and blessing his dreams since their departure called out to him.

There by the car, Rey stood, mouth hung open as she stared at him. Her bright hazel eyes shone
with hardly restrained astonishment. She looked beautiful, if not slightly exhausted.

Standing up straight, suitcase clutched awkwardly in his gangly arms, Ben gapped back at her.

“Rey!”

Shuffling a bit, Ben dropped his belongs to the floor.

She stepped out from behind the door, completely dazed and panicked at the sight of him.

“Wha—what are you doing here?” He opened his mouth to respond only for Rey to continue her troubled sputtering. “You’re supposed to be in New York! Not—not that I am not happy to see you, because I am extremely happy to see you—” She shook her head, rushing up to him with a beaming grin.

And then froze, arms held aloft in the air, as if going in for a hug.

Saving her from embarrassment, Ben bit back prickling reservations and enveloped her into his embrace. She collapsed into his warmth, standing up on her tippy-toes to tuck her face into his neck. Crouching down to accommodate her, Ben’s left hand brought her in closer, cradling the back of her head. Shaky, watery chuckles kissed his skin, his own hearty laughs echoing in response.

Somehow the middle of nowhere Scotland, sopping wet with unforgiving winds and rain felt more like home than his apartment. Standing with her was home, being separated only further proved the truth wished to re-acknowledged.

Pulling away, Rey squeezed his shoulders. Confusion settled over her eyes, “Why are you here?”

“To finally end First Order, for good.”

“Have you seen him yet?” Ben asked quietly.

The car ride to the Knight Manor was a few hours long and relatively boring, rain obstructing the scenic view out the windows. Luke had been kind enough to let Rey and Ben share the backseat while he opted to sit up front with Q. Jinn. The two older men chatted with each other like old friends despite never having met before that very day.

Rey and Ben on the other hand struggled to get out any words without stuttering or blushing for no apparent reason other than being in each other’s presence.

Looking over at Ben, she shook her head.

“I have only emailed him, we haven’t even spoken on the phone.” Glancing at the two older men briefly, she continued, “He’s never been there when I have visited Knight’s Manor in the past. I honestly don’t know what to expect—I don’t even know what he looks like.”

He could not hide his disbelief. “You didn’t google him?”

“Of course I googled him!” She hissed, lightly slapping Ben’ shoulder. “But I highly doubt a photo of him at sixty looks the same as he does at ninety-two.”
“Okay, you have a valid point there.” Her jaw twitched, Ben noticing how her eyes were beginning to glisten. She was becoming frustrated, Rey a notorious frustrated crier. Considering for a moment, Ben decided to do what he did best—listen and comfort her. Gradually he reached his left hand over to her fisted hand on her lap. Covering her hand with his own, Ben spoke softly, “What is scaring you about him? About this?”

Blinking, a stray tear streaked under her eye. Turning over her hand, she firmly pressed her palm to his. Brushing her calloused skin under his, she threaded their fingers together.

“I don’t want to know why he never contact me, I’m afraid…” she licked her lips, struggling to find the right words, “I’m afraid he’ll tell me why and I won’t be able to handle it.”

Silently, Ben squeezed her hand.

She squeezed back.

“I’ll show you to your rooms,” Q. Jinn informed the trio as they entered the large home.

Upon entering, warmth welcomed them like an old friend. Rey slipped her coat off, along with her boots. The manor has not changed much over the last two years, central heating appearing the be the biggest development. The same mildly tasteful paintings lined the walls along with modest furniture in the living area. Demask patterned rugs decorated the halls while the rest of the house’s floors shined, polished. Strands of garland hung from the banisters and a wreath decorated every door, even the hall closets.

The only inkling someone else was in the house was the quiet boiling of water from the kitchen.

Stepping away from the entrance and tucking her suitcase over by the stairs, Rey aloud her feet to lead her to the back of the house. Dim sconces lit the corridors, Rey feeling less at home the longer she walked through the house.

She stopped in the doorway of the kitchen, unable to see herself forward into the room, holding the swinging door open.

A man sat at the circular kitchen table, his hair white and face worn proudly with wrinkles. He wore a cozy brown sweater and khakis, half moon glasses perched on his nose. A book laid out before him, the spine weathered but well.

As though feeling her stare, he looked up, his clear blue eyes smiling ‘hello’.

Rey gulped, holding her head up high.

“Hello Grandfather.”

“Rachel,” he nodded, closing the book. “Would you like some tea?”

Chapter End Notes
I TOLD YOU GUYS THEY WOULD BE REUNITED SOON.

AND WE MEET OUR SAVIOR OBI-WAN KENOBI!!!

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I enjoy discussing the fic with my readers! :D
So Uncivilized

Chapter Summary

Rey and Kenobi might not ever see eye to eye.

Chapter Notes

Hello! :D

Here is the next chapter--and yes. You read the chapter count right, somethings jumped ahead and others got moved back which ended up in two chapters getting cut out.

So this leaves us in the final days--officially.

As usual, typos will be fixed later.

Enjoy! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You have grown so much since I last saw you.”

“That kind of happens when you don’t see someone for twenty years—they grow,” Rey said bluntly. Stubbornly, she remained in the doorway.

Unphased by her comment, Kenobi stood up and began to make his tea.

“Yes, it seems so,” he mused quietly, “But nevertheless you have grown into a fine young woman by the likes of it.”

Jaw twitching, Rey’s eyes remained ahead, focused on the blue title wash behind the kitchen sink. For all her life, she thought about finding her family. To find where she belonged, where she came from. When she found out she did have relatives, supposed ‘cousins’ who did not bothered to visit her or get to know her, all little fantasies of grandeur faded to a bitter nub. She was fine with being alone. She was fine with being her own family; finding her own family through others, through friendships. Everything was fine.

Everything was fine.

Until it wasn’t.

That November night, Ben’s information caused every notion Rey wore with armor to crack and crumble. A grandfather. A grandfather who was alive being some kind of recluse, owned the company her ‘beloved’ wanted to shut down—it was something out of a dollar novel. Especially when all the facts were not addressed. The thought caused a sour taste in her mouth.
“Why not sit down and have some tea?” He offered, not once looking up from his work.

For weeks, Rey thought she’d snap at the man. Curse him. *Yell.* Make him feel pain she felt—the intense *loneliness.*

However, it became impossible with Kenobi’s tranquil demeanor.

Not to mention she’d feel childish at such an outburst.

“No thank you,” she said, a chilling air to her presence, “I need to get settled and I believe you have other guests.”

With every ounce of energy in her being, she turned away from Kenobi. Holding her breath, she walked back down the hall, ignoring Ben and Luke who lingered a few feet away from the kitchen. She didn’t even know they followed or listened or cared—

No, that last one was a lie. A feverish lie she told herself to feel ‘stronger,’ to not feel the need to be dependent on others.

They cared. Ben absolutely cared; he always cared despite his tremendously awful communication skills. Luke, despite his shitty actions and words, cared.

But she did not want pity. She did not want comfort.

She wanted to process, or at the very least, fucking breathe.

Once in the entryway, she swiftly picked up her suitcase and made her way upstairs to her usual room.

Her vision began to blur.

No.

Reaching the landing, she sucked in more air, *fine* with the mild pressure in her chest.

Passing by a study and one of the empty rooms on the right side of the corridor, she made it to her room on the end. Shutting the door behind her, she shakily released her grip on the suitcase.

Making one, then two steps to the bed she sat down.

Exhaling, she did not cry. Unshed tears remained in their ducts, drying and clearing in painfully still moments.

Instead, a numbing ache filled from her chest to her throat to her gut.

Rey Kenobi had a grandfather…yet she did not feel different.

She was still *just Rey.* It was easier to be *just Rey* than someone else’s family, especially Benjamin W. Kenobi’s family. After all, all her life it was just her and her thoughts; a simple nobody.

Rey was a nobody, and maybe for once, she liked it that way.
“Uh-uh-uh,” Luke tutted, catching Ben’s arm before the man could make a break for it, “Leave her be; she needs some time alone. I don’t blame her.”

Knowing his uncle was right, Ben did not press further or try to run after her. His first instinct was to check in on her, provide comfort yet he knew charging in right after her might end up in another blow up. She needed time to think, to feel. Another person in the room would only bring pressure, even if that person was Ben.

Without another word, the men decided amongst themselves it best to greet Kenobi.

“Why if it isn’t Skywalker and young Solo?” Kenobi said as the two entered the room. Carrying his tray of tea and biscuits, he sat back down at the kitchen table. He was older than Ben imagined with a youthful tone to his voice. However his blue eyes spoke of his age, seeing far too much in his lifetime. “I swear, I only see your family when something has gone wrong,” he muttered, quirking a knowing eyebrow at the two. “Now please, sit,” he motioned to the other available seats, Luke moving first, “I also apologize for my granddaughter, while I do not know her well, I do feel responsible for her.”

Ben clenched his fists before coaxing himself to sit down beside Luke.

“Do you not know her?” Ben asked, feeling Luke’s stern yet warry eyes on him.

A shadow of somber coated Kenobi at his question.

“No. Matter of circumstance brought us here. It was her year for the estate for the holidays, and my cottage in the hills is not suitable for company,” he explained briskly, his accent smooth despite his edge. “Though I figured it would be a time before we became acquainted.”

“I see,” Luke interjected before Ben could edge in a word; probably for the best all things considering. “It is a pleasure to see you Old Ben. It’s been what, almost thirty years?”

Kenobi cracked a grin, “Depends—how old is Benjamin, here?” His blue eyes focused intently on Ben.

Licking his lips and squeezing his hands together underneath the table, he answer, “Thirty-two.”

“Ahh,” Kenobi sighed, his eyes never leaving Ben’s. There was vague, unsettling haunt in Kenobi’s eyes, Ben growing more uncomfortable by the second. “Yes, I haven’t seen you since you were maybe four, five if we want to be generous,” Kenobi’s face then soften. “You have your grandmother’s eyes and your grandfather’s brood. I pity the soul who bonds with you, they have quite the personality to contend with,” he joked lightly.

Luke coughed into his laugh, while Ben immediately looked away from the man to the graining of the hardwood table.

Maybe no one should mention that very soul was upstairs.

“Tea?” Kenobi asked.


Not trusting his voice, Ben nodded gratefully. He could handle a few hospitalities before asking for the papers to be signed. Hopefully.
Tucking away her last piece of clothing, a warm burgundy sweater she wore on the coldest days, a sharp distinct knock echoed on her door.

Steeling her features and shoulders back, Rey went to answer her door.

A sheepish Ben Solo stood before her.

His hair lost some of it’s usual luster in the rain and wind, but the ends began to curl around his face. She noticed he dressed…warmer these days. His color palate grew beyond monochromatic; some reds, some greens, some blues. His slightly baggy sweatshirt reminded Rey of a picture she found in his office at First Order Literary months ago, the one of him and Luke. For all she knew it could be the same exact sweater, but clearly it could not. Nineteen year old Ben was lanky, frail, while thirty-two year old Ben was broad, firm.

“I wasn’t too sure if you wanted to see anyone,” he spoke up after a moment, “But Luke and K—” He paused, unsure.

“You can say his name,” she assured him without bias. “I won’t lose my shit over his name.”

“Right—well, Luke and Kenobi are catching up, so I thought I’d come to see how you are doing.”

A quiet minute passed. Then another.

She expected him to leave when it felt like the five minute mark.

He didn’t. He waited, patiently.

Pressing her lips together, Rey opened the door fully. Understanding, Ben stepped into the room, Rey shutting the door after him. Taking a seat back on the edge of her bed with her legs folded underneath her, she patted the spot beside her. He sat down, the bed dipping slightly with a creek, both once again reminded of the aged house they occupied.

“I…don’t know how I feel,” she murmured. Her hands began to fiddle with the folded edges of her quilt. “I want answers, but I also don’t. I—” she blinked, baffled “—this might sound completely stupid but I want to go home. But not actually go home, back to the apartment or anything but, I don’t know,” she huffed, hugging herself across her middle, “I want to go somewhere that feels like home, but I know that’s not home. I just…” She trailed off, shaking her head tiredly. “I’m not even making sense.”

“You’re making sense,” he said, validating her babblings. “You are making sense. I understand,” he continued, his words honest and full. His dark pretty eyes gaze intently at her, silently asking how to help.

Scooting over the few inches separating them, Rey gently leaned her head on Ben’s shoulder. She felt his neck shift, then pressed a firm kiss on the top of her head.

“Rey, whatever it is you are feeling, even if you can’t articulate it,” she snorted lightly at his formal speaking. If he noticed he didn’t comment on it. “Just know you are not alone.”

Over the bed, his hand found hers, intertwining together naturally.

Looking down at their connected hands, the truth of Ben’s words had sank in.
How could she have forgotten—Ben’s grandfather was under his nose the entire time, a fact he struggled to grapple with months later. A fact he may never truly understand despite reading everything the man wrote in his lifetime. Vader was gone, Ben could never truly ask the gnawing question of why.

Of course both their situations were different, but in the end their loneliness and betrayal were felt. If not of the same gravity.

Lifting her head up, Rey could not help but gaze fondly at him. The afternoon sky cast little light into the room, yet the lingering beams danced atop their heads. For once she noticed Ben did not have simply shocking dark hair, but a blend of light brown and dark. She reached up and brushed stray strands of hair from his face.

He quirked an eyebrow at her.

Leaning over she pressed a chaste kiss on his cheek.

Pulling back, she narrowed her eyes playfully, “I’m not sure how I feel about the beard. It’s kind of scratchy.” To prove her point, she teasingly rubbed the pads of her fingers where her lips had been. He shook his head with a growing smirk she retracted her hand. “I mean, the beard makes you look older, but I kind of like the eternal youth, vampire vibe you gave before. It reeked mystic.”

“Of course you did, you former Twilight fiend,” he taunted.

“I will have you know I was Team Jacob, not Team Edward—did you not see how scrawny the vampire side was? Disappointing, I tell you.”

A beguiled grin bloomed on his face, his hands flying to grasp her arms. “I knew it! You did like it —”

“Oh, shut the fuck up,” she swatted away at him, her words drowned into giggles.

Fighting him off, she threw a pillow at him, Ben catching the offended object easily. He tossed it back before pulling her into a round of tickles, the two fighting and giving into the relief.

A thump sounded from upstairs, followed by a light shriek of laughter.

Luke rolled his eyes before focusing back to Kenobi.

He knew Ben and Rey wouldn’t take too long to get back to…whatever hell they had before, or something similar.

His host, however, seemed lost on the connection the two young adults shared.

“The two know each other?” Kenobi asked, sipping his tea.

Okay, maybe not completely lost. Kenobi was a wise and intuitive; making the connection between Rey and Ben should not be that difficult in all frankness.

Kenobi hummed, “How did that happen? Last I heard Ben was in New York and Rachel—”

“She likes to go by ‘Rey’. I’ve never heard her once be referred to by ‘Rachel,’” Luke said calmly, though a twinge of frustration spiked inside him. “They met in a…” he thought for a moment, a way to explain it simply, “They were pen pals and grew close over time.”

“A Skywalker and Kenobi—a devious combination,” the older man quipped, “Though neither are truly such, no?”

No. No, they weren’t. Ben was too much like his father; more than anyone gave him credit. Stubborn, yet kind hearted. Knew when to do the right thing despite it all—despite his own desires.

Rey on the other hand—she was reckless yet methodical, a loose canon with an unknown trajectory. Also, unbelievably stubborn, but had unbelieving—hell unwavering faith—in the most oddest of people.

Ben being one of them.

Kenobi’s acted on the side of ‘lawfully good,’ for the betterment of other’s. Luke could not necessarily say that of Rey.

“No,” Luke breathed, “They’re better.” He shrugged, picking up a jammy dodger. He chewed the biscuit thoughtfully. “Trust me, if you want to get to know Rey, you need to get to know Ben. And vice versa. They are pretty protective over each other.”

“Hmm,” Kenobi grunted, “But hopefully not too much—”

“He’s not my father,” Luke assured him, “If there is anyone to be concerned about, it is Rey. She… can be quite terrifying when provoked. She definitely has her mother’s spunk.”

The other man remained neutral at the mention of his adoptive daughter.

“I see,” was all he said before busying himself with his tea once more.

Unable to help himself, Luke peered sharply at Kenobi. “I need to ask—why the hiding? You had a wife, and a granddaughter—”

“A man needs to be alone with his thoughts,” he replied simply. Luke knew the look in Kenobi’s eyes; it was not the time to argue.

Blinking blearily, Ben found the room to be dark and a heavy weight on his chest. Readjusting his glasses, he found the vague form of Rey, her loose hair tickling his neck. She was warm and soft against him, Ben reminded how much he liked laying with her.

Somewhere along their tickle fight and pointless conversations (“Yes, I do love eating the airplane peanuts.” “Seriously? I feel like you are fucking with me.” “Nope, I love them you snob!”) he and Rey fell asleep mid-conversation. Jetlag claimed them, Ben still groggy despite sleeping a few hours. His arm Rey slept on felt like pins and needles. Gently, he twisted out from under her, hoping to relieve the pressure.

Unfortunately his movements woke her.
“Ben,” she murmured, her voice drenched in sleep. She squinted at him, her glasses also half on her face. Clumsily she fixed her frames. “Where are you going?”

“Uh,” he cleared his throat, “Nowhere. I just needed to move—”

Her hands snaked around his neck, pulling him closer to her. Momentarily Ben lost his balance, flailing, before catching himself. His body hovered over hers, Ben bracing himself by his arms on either side of her. Narrowly he missed kneeing her thigh, instead their legs tangling in an awkward embrace. Panic set in his bones as she stared back up at him, eyes wide and wanting.

“Hi,” she breathed.

“Hi,” he repeated back, licking his lips nervously.

“I have been trying extremely hard—”

“That’s a poor choice of words—”

“To not jump your bones,” she exhaled sharply, hands tightening and threading through his hair, “the entire time since I’ve seen you.”

“Oh,” Ben stated dumbly, lips parting.

“No one every says how difficult it is to not have sex once you do it. It’s like a switch has been turned on and it can’t be shut off!” she hissed with a cringe. “Honestly it is embarrassing, and I can only get myself off—”

“Please stop talking,” Ben huffed, the room suddenly very warm, “Because if you keep on talking, I swear—”

“Are you telling me you have not masturbated to the thought of me the entire time we have been apart, hmm?” She stared up at him imploringly. The stern edge in her eyes already told him she knew the answer.

Ben groaned, head hanging by the crook in her neck. “What type of question is that? Of course I have—” He stopped himself, pulling away from her. He tried to sit back on his legs, but Rey stubbornly followed, practically sitting on his lap. “No—no. I know what you are thinking.”

“And what am I thinking?” Rey asked, elongating each syllable.

“That because we are both here and ya know,” he waved in the small space between them. Rey raised an eyebrow at the display, “know how the other feels then it will be okay to—”

Grabbing him by the neck, Rey pulled Ben down into nose bumping, teeth clattering kiss. Okay, she’s doing exactly what he thought she’d be doing. He winced, but melted into her touch seconds later. She easily folded into his lap, hands twining and curling in his hair before brushing teasingly by his ears. Lips parting, their hasty, pressing nipping deepened causing throaty pants from Rey.

But the moment her hips began to roll needlingly against his, Ben knew they had to stop.

Breaking away from her, Ben tenderly caressed Rey’s jaw with one hand, while his held her thigh, keeping her firmly against him.

“We—we can’t—” he stuttered, eyes a little wild, “My uncle and your grandpa are here,” he
reminded her lightheadedly. “They are downstairs or upstairs—actually I don’t know what time it is—”

She tugged at the hem of his sweater, “Then we will be quiet,” she stressed, her legs tightening around his hips.

A light grunt escaped him, “This—is a bad idea. We haven’t seen each other in while, we’ve only recently started talking again—”

“And I love you, and you love me,” her hands rested on his shoulders, squeezing them as an anchor, “Despite our shitty situation and awful communication skills, I still care about you and miss you and—” she kissed him again, Ben’s feeling his chest swelling. She pulled away quickly, his mouth attempting to follow hers in the break. Shakily, she tucked his hair behind his ears. “I don’t know what else I am supposed to say, Ben.”

“Nothing, nothing,” he muttered, his hands rubbing soothing circles into her hips. He…he did not know what to do with that information. Her words were not apologetic, but there was flurry of remorse in her voice. Rey and remorse hardly ever went hand in hand; hearing her this way caused his stomach to tighten. “You don’t need to say anything else,” he took a deep breath, “You don’t need to say anything else right now.”

Tiredly, she dropped her head on his shoulder, Ben simply holding her.

“I just…just hate not knowing what we are—”

“You shouldn’t be worrying about us right now,” he insisted, feeling her indignation at how she dug her chin into his shoulder. “I shouldn’t matter—”

“You always matter,” she refuted, her arms wrapping around his chest. “You always matter to me, even when you are a jackass and stubborn recluse, you matter to me.”

“Thanks,” he remarked dryly. Biting his lips together, Ben rested his head against hers. “What I’m trying to say is…just because I am here doesn’t mean you hide in my arms.”

“I’m not…” Rey trailed off, understandably realizing she was in fact hiding in his arms in that very moment.

“You need to talk to him,” Ben told her simply, “You need to tell him how you feel, civilly, and I am not saying to forgive him. Hell, you never have to forgive him if you want, but you still need to get some closure.”

“When did you get wise?”

“It comes with the beard.”

She snorted into his shoulder.

“I’m…I’m not going to say you are right—”

“Of course not.”

“But,” Rey uttered pointedly, “I am also not going to say you are wrong.”

Grinning, a joyful mocking gasp sounded from him, “Wow, you really have grown—”

A loud knock from the door caused the two to tense.
“Shit,” Ben hissed, Rey scrambling into action at his words.

He got off the bed looking around for a moment—he was tall and massive as she loved to remind him, and hiding was practically impossible for him. Before panic could set home in his chest, Rey started to heard him into the far corner away from the door’s eyeline.

“Stay there,” she warned, hands out.

“Like I have anywhere else to go,” he quipped back harshly.

Rey stuck her tongue out to him as she rushed to get the door, another knock echoing off the wood. On the potential third round of knocks she swung open the door—to find Luke on the other side.

“Hey kid,” he greeted, hands tucked into his pockets, “I just wanted to check in on you. You kind of ran out of there fast a while back.”

Crossing her arms over her chest, she nodded nimbly. “I’m… okay,” she decided on, “Just a lot. I uh, thought maybe some sleep would help.”

“Ah,” he intoned, rocking a bit on his heels, “And do you think this sleep helped?”

“Absolutely, only bummer is I missed dinner,” she shrugged helplessly.

“You didn’t miss much, just two old guys chatting. Leftovers are in the fridge,” he informed her, head tilting to the side. “I just want to let you know… Kenobi,” he chuckled mirthlessly, almost sadly, “He is old.”

“And?”

“And one thing I know about old men is they can be very much set in their ways and state of mind,” he said bitterly, his face grim. “Don’t be discouraged if you and him don’t see eye to eye.”

Standing still, Rey took his words for face value. For once Luke was transparent, she unable to claim otherwise. “Duly noted.”

“Also,” Luke leaned past Rey, head in the room, “Ben, you are a tree of a human. I can see you.”

Ben stepped out of the shadows, Rey shooting him a stern look. “Uncle—"

Holding his hands up in surrender, Luke shook his head. “I don’t want to know all I ask is you use protection because I don’t want any more nieces or nephews, I am fine with just the over grown one.”

“Oh, we weren’t,” Rey gestured between herself and Ben, no one believing her half-hearted protest.

“Like I said I don’t want to know,” Luke repeated, “Just be glad it was me and not Kenobi. Lord knows that man would have a heart attack.”

With those final words, Luke bid the two good night, heading to his own room on the opposite end of the hall.

“I’m going to go to my own room,” Ben announced, stepping past Rey into the hall.

“You’re not going to stay?” she asked, her voice small. “I thought since…”
Ben sighed, rubbing at his jaw. “Rey—I think we both know it is best I stay in another room.”

“Right,” she schooled her features, though the disappointment in her eyes remained.

“I’ll be next door if you need anything,” he said, forcing himself to take another step away from the doorway.

“Alright,” she said, looking back up at him through her lashes, “Love you—”

“Bye,” Ben finished with a tired smile. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

Breakfast was a tense, stilted affair.

Rey’s glare was felt by all occupants. Luke flinched at her aggressive jam spreading, his gaze remaining on his own food for the duration of the meal.

Kenobi on the other hand seemed to ignore Rey all together. He geared the morning conversation towards Ben, interested in her… ex-boyfriend/partner/lover (?)/whatever, instead of his own granddaughter.

She tried not to let it get her, but it got to her.

“It seemed as though you and Vader had a remarkable work relationship. It’s a pity you found of your relation too late,” Kenobi commented after Ben recounted a couple of stories of the late Anakin Vader.

“I wouldn’t say I found out too late,” Ben corrected somewhat respectfully, “more so, I was withheld information. Which I believe seems to be the pattern amongst our families.”

Under the table, Rey kicked him.

Deftly, he dodged her. Ben then turned his chair to Kenobi, becoming just out of Rey’s reach.

_The bastard._

Kenobi did not acknowledge Ben’s last comment

“Luke says you are writing a book,” Kenobi said, clearly goading for more details.

“Yes, a simple novel. Coming of age, a romance,” Ben shrugged his shoulders, his eyes shifting to Rey briefly, “nothing extremely notable.”

“It is one thing to be humble,” Kenobi said lightly spreading his jam, “It is another to be _overly_ humble, to the point you seem like you do not like your work. Be proud of the work you have accomplished even if only a few eyes have seen it.”

“You sound like you are speaking from experience,” Ben commented, fiddling with his fork. His sausage and tomatoes remained untouched, Rey tempted to pull over his plate and take the remaining food. If he wasn’t going to appreciate a full English breakfast then she would for him.

“One of my novels was not as much as a success than I anticipated—”
“The Scavenger and the Lost Prince?” Rey interjected, Kenobi finally looking over that morning. “I read everything I could of that book—it means everything to me. I even changed my last name because it inspired me to be a writer like you. I did this before I even knew of our connection,” she rambled heatedly, her jaw twitching and eyes narrowed in hard disappointment.

“It was like fate then,” Luke said warily, a nervous chuckle in his voice.

“Shut up, Uncle,” Ben murmured from beside him.

“Well, I’m sorry to disappoint you Rachel, but it was a work of love that that did little to foster a following or acknowledgements. I might even say it is the reason I no longer enjoy writing,” Kenobi replied politely unphased by her blooming anger.

“It’s ‘Rey’, I haven’t been called ‘Rachel’ since I left the home,” she stated, her expression stony. Her hands clenched on the table, she trying her best to regulate her breathing. “Something you would know if you bothered to contact me, or find me—”

“Of course I found you, who else do you think left you that money. A fairy godmother?”

“No—but I didn’t want money or a manor,” she waved to the ceiling, “a manor I share with a supposed ‘cousin’. Just grow some balls old man and say you are the ‘cousin’ because I fucking tired of this little mind game charade we all had to participate in, you coward!”

Kenobi shook his head haughtily, glancing at Ben and Luke from the corner of his eye. Skywalker’s were practically family, letting them in on some information would not cause more harm already done. “You were nearly an adult when I finally located you, and you had already filed for emancipation. I did not want to interrupt your plans, so quietly declaring you had a long distance relative seemed to be the best bet.”

The room grew quiet at the implications of his words. A new, agitated fire set in Rey’s eyes.

“You’ve—you’ve known about me, where the hell I was, since I was fifteen?” She gapped at the older man. “That’s practically seven years—I’m sorry, but I don’t understand this—this whole reasoning. If you have family—”

“We are merely family by name and documents, you are in no way my flesh and blood, nor do I know anything about you.”

“Because you never let us have the opportunity!” she grated, seething. Shakily she stood up, grabbing her plate. Just before she turned to the sink, she stared hard at her grandfather. “I…I did not come here to argue. I only came because it was my year to come, and I have been going through some things,” her eyes shifted to Ben, who gazed upon her sadly. “If you’re explanation is…is practicality, and we are not family, then I no longer need to justify this—this connection or how I feel about it. I’ll just move on.”

Exhaling shakily, she went to the sink, clearing her plate before completely leaving the room. The three men sat still, all lost in their own turbulent thoughts.

Huffing, Ben stood up and briskly followed after Rey.

“Old Ben,” Luke spoke up, “The kid…she’s a good kid. Doesn’t know when to back out of a fight or argument, but probably one of the best I ever came across.”

“And this matters?” Kenobi said, cutting his food into pieces.
“Because she deserves a family. Everyone deserves a family,” Luke breathed out, his bones feeling weary after witnessing the tense conversation.

Frowning at the doorway, Kenobi squinted thoughtfully.

“The boy…” he murmured, “He loves her.”

“I—” Luke cut himself off, a soft smile emerging. “I can’t speak for them, but yeah I think so.”

“He watches her like she is his whole world—that’s a dangerous kind of love,” he murmured, “Anakin looked at Padme that way—”

“He’s not Anakin,” Luke chuckled tiredly, “And he’s also not Han,” he said more to himself, “He’s Ben, and I think he’s finally letting himself be that person. You’re granddaughter encouraged that.”

“Hm,” Kenobi forked a piece of food. “Interesting.”

Luke’s face fell at his former mentors apparent disinterest. He picked at his food, deciding how he could help make things better between the estranged family members.

“He’s a fucking dick!” She shouted the moment she made it outside, knowing Ben was only a couple of feet behind her. “My grandfather is a fucking dick!”

“Is your motto in life, ‘Everyone is a dick until not proven dickish’?” Ben quipped, earning a piercing glare in return. “Right, sorry. Snarkiness in check.”

“I—I didn’t mean to start baring my soul and pain in there—it just fucking happened! It was disgusting,” she groaned into her hands, pacing back and forth behind the house. “I came up with a plan last night; I’d be pleasant the entire day then when he and I were finally alone, I’d express my feelings civilly. Like you said to do!”

Dutifully, Ben pressed his lips together, nodding along as she explained. Shivering slightly, he tucked his hands into his pockets.

“…and then maybe, maybe, we could be acknowledging of each other. Maybe send a Christmas card or birthday present and never really have to see each other, like normal estranged families.”

“There is northing normal about an estranged family, Rey,” Ben interjected, “And that is me, speaking as someone who was estranged from his father and uncle for a good six—seven years. Resentment is a powerful thing.”

“Stop being wisey-wise, it makes you sound obnoxiously pretentious,” she growled, arms crossed over her chest.

“We both know I am already occasionally pretentious,” he reminded her, deadpanned. Hearing enough, Ben caught her by the elbow, pulling her closer to him. Annoyed, she gazed up at him impatiently. “First of all—your plan would have never worked, so stop being upset about that.”

“But you said—”

“Sweetheart, I am going to tell you something, and you have to promise me to not get mad.” She
grumbled a ‘go ahead,’ Ben taking a deep breath before continuing. “You do not know how to be civil when you are upset. Like at all,” he told her honestly, squeezing her shoulders reassuringly. “What you did right there was possibly the most civil you could have been considering your track record.”

She shut her eyes tightly, leaning into his hold. “Damnit, you’re right,” she huffed, puffs of visible air filling the atmosphere. “I’m not going to apologize to him.”

“Then don’t.”

“I just…I thought I would get answers, and I did, just not the one’s I wanted,” she admitted quietly. Peering up at him, she clasped her hand over his on her shoulder. “I’m glad you are here…even though we…I don’t know,” she rolled her eyes, deciding it best to not get into that matter quite yet, “I don’t know what I would have done if I was alone.”

He pressed a kiss to her forehead, and lingered for a moment. “You’re not alone.”

“Neither are you,” she muttered, breaking away from him.

 Sadly, Ben watched her go back into the house, feeling the tension of not talking about well, everything, starting to linger uncomfortably.

Ben rekindled the fire again, the midday just as cold as the morning. Mostly everyone in the building congregated to some part of the sitting room. Kenobi sat closest to the fire, a book in his lap. In the sofa couple of feet away, Luke was going over the latest draft of Ben’s manuscript, green pen marking and noting with a lazy scrawl. Furthest was Rey, sitting at the bay window with her laptop perched on her lap and a leg tucked under her. The other side across from her remained open, the blanket they shared rumbled from his departure. A soft hum of the speaker and piano from the shelf made the space homier. After some convincing, Kenobi allowed Ben to play a soft classical radio to fill the space, the building too old and too quiet for comfort.

“Hm, Ben,” Luke inquired disrupting the mild silence. “I have a question about this section’s structure…”

Ben nodded, joining his uncle with an apologetic glance at Rey.

She shrugged, adjusting her glasses before turning back to her writing. They’d been stick together the entire morning into the afternoon.

“Rachel,” Kenobi spoke up as Ben and Luke continued their hushed discussion. “Why is it you like ‘The Scavenger and the Lost Prince’?”

Looking up from her screen, her eyebrows pinched together, unprepared for the question.

She and Ben had talked for hours upon hours analyzing the meaning and language of the novel… however she never explicitly stated what she liked about the story in general.

“Um, I love the story of these two unlikely people realizing just how alike they are—the steadfast of their friendship, the fleetingness—hesitance of their love,” Rey answered honestly.
“But the Scavenger and the Prince do not end up together,” Kenobi reminded her, remorse and dread intertwining painful in his voice.

“I know,” she said, mildly offended, “I know, but that doesn’t mean it is not a good story or that it doesn’t end on a hopeful note,” she defended, “In the end, the Prince sees her in the crowd and they both leave to meet later that night—how is that not hopeful?”

“Because you don’t know if they live happily ever after,” Kenobi stated plainly, as though hearing the very comment iterated to him plenty of times.

“That’s what I like—I like not knowing, it gives the reader their own ending.”

Kenobi did not bother with a response, instead choosing to go back to his book.

Huffing, Rey rolled her eyes. Maybe he’d never truly be direct but she’d take what she could get.

“Old Ben, you are telling me you don’t have cable in this godforsaken house?”

“Well, why would I need television when I have books,” the older man grumbled. Noticing the unenthused looks of the three others in the room, he frowned exasperatedly. “I have Wi-Fi, you can watch a New Year’s Eve countdown on that,” he grumbled, “The password is ‘uncivilized’.”

“Thank you,” Luke said, all three of them starting to connect to the Wi-Fi.

Coming over the center of the room, Rey set her laptop on the coffee table, pulling up a stream. They had roughly twenty more minutes until the countdown. Ben brought their blanket and wine he found in the kitchen earlier, while Luke hastily set aside their papers and work. Realizing Ben forgot the wine glasses, Rey rushed off to find them.

Opening the first couple of cabinets she came up short. Reaching for the next set, a throat cleared.

“Rey, I would check the one on the furthest end,” Kenobi suggested, stepping into the room. “They were there the last time I check.”

Freezing, she nodded once, grateful before going to the cabinet.

“Rey,” he said again as she pulled down four wine glasses. She stilled, choosing to leave her back to him. He did need to see her upset or red faced again. “After some thought, I believe we should… keep in contact in this new year. I am not asking for phone calls, or a relationship. I don’t think we can ever have something like that,” she squeezed her eyes shut at those words, the truth hurting more than she wanted it to. “All I am asking for is updates. Honest updates.”

Holding her breath, Rey turned back to Kenobi, her head held high.

Swallowing, she knew what she had to do. If her and Kenobi were similar in any way, it was their ability to avoid one topic and dive head first into another troublesome one.

“Alright, I can do that,” Rey agreed. She held her hand up, stopping any response from her grandfather. “Only if you sign those papers.”

Kenobi raised an eyebrow, before feigning confusion. “What papers?”
Her eyes narrowed, “The very papers you have not mentioned once the entire time Ben and Luke have been here. They are being overly polite and considerate because they are afraid you’ll deny them.”

He had the decency to look ashamed.

His clear gaze connected with her, unrelenting in his stance on the matter. “I have not signed them because it was a failsafe for your future—”

“My future is Ben,” she said, conviction in every syllable, her words unwavering, “and he does not want to be trapped by this company anymore. If you care about me, or the Skywalkers you will sign those papers.”

Kenobi remained unmoving, considering her words in the moment.

“You love him,” he said simply, however his opinion vague.

She shifted from foot to foot, suddenly finding the clear wine glasses interesting.

“Well…yeah,” she mumbled. Ben already knew that, his family was keenly aware…but there was something different at admitting it to her grandfather. “He’s my person; he’s probably always going to be my person. We’re just—we are in an impasse right now.”

“You are ‘taking a break’?” He stressed with air quotation marks.

Rey raised an eyebrow, lips quirking to the side, “You watch Friends?”

“I am old, not uncultured, Rey,” he shook his head, “Of course I know the memes and whatnot.”

An unexpected chuckle left her, Rey blinking owlishly at him. “Oh, I uh—”

“He loves you too—anyone with eyes can see that,” Kenobi said, reverting back to the subject.

“I know,” Rey said quietly, dropping her gaze. “But sometimes you are not meant to be in a relationship with the person you love. You need to grow and learn how to be on your own and—”

“There is such a thing as being too cautious,” he said heatedly, dropping a hand to the counter as he came closer to her. “Take it from an old man who makes too many mistakes in the name of righteousness—don’t be cautious with that boy.”

“But he’s the one who is cautious—”

“Let me guess; you were the one who broke things off, hm?” Kenobi dug, Rey uncomfortable at his correct observation.

Biting her lips together, she shrugged once, helplessly. “Technically, it was mutual, but yes I did bring up the topic after a rather—” Her eyes widened, thinking over the disastrous proposal. “—after a bad decision on both our parts.”

She came to terms about their break-up as best she could. They both were to blame because they were both scared of two different things, and thought acting rash would solve their problems. Clearly, it didn’t. Her and Ben’s time apart had been doing wonders for them personally—he started a book, she figured out her plan for her last year of college, they both started to be supportive outside of their own needs and wants. They started to become friends again; she never realized it, but Rey genuinely enjoyed being Ben’s friend and missed their discussions. Talking
about nothing and everything. Somewhere in their flourish to be more, they lost who they were in the beginning. It felt like old times... But jumping on him and proceeding to make-out viciously reminded her that no, they could never act like 'old times.'

“We—we are messy together, and the long distance was slowly killing us—”

“Are you sure that wasn’t an excuse? The long distance?” Kenobi implored, “Because I have heard that song from so many, I know when it is a lie and the truth.”

“I…” She smiled tightly, unsure of how to answer. Mostly because she did not have an answer.

Kenobi tutted, taking the tray of wine glasses from the counter. “Take your time, I will bring these out there.”

He left the kitchen, Rey’s mind whirling with thoughts...

Did…is she the reason Ben is overly cautious? Because she hit the breaks a bit too hard in their break up?

But they were doing so well apart; at least that is what she assumed. For all she knew he could holding her The Cure shirt hostage because he sniffed it at night like a love sick fool. Maybe they were both hiding how awful it was to sleep alone and how miserable they were sometimes because the other person wasn’t there.

“Hey, Kenobi was saying—”

Her head shot up at the sound of his voice, Ben standing in the doorway, puzzled at her bewildered expression. All that suddenly stuck out to her was how she professed her love to him the previous night, and how he dodged the conversation expertly. Maybe Kenobi had a point—what if they were fueling each other excuses?

“Ben, I told you I loved you last night and you didn’t say it back—”

His jaw locked, pain shining tightly in his eyes.

“You already know how I feel,” he said tersely, “Plus I told you the other day on the phone—”

Her aggravation peaked, knowing he was going to beat around the bush, “It’s different. Saying it over the phone or video call is different than saying it in person.”

“Rey, I don’t want to talk about this—”

She choked down a scoff, her hands fistiting at her sides. “Ben, you never want to talk about it,” she stepped forward, finally fed up with his evading. “We are in this cycle of never wanting to talk about it because you are not ready or you think I am not ready. Well, I am and we are going to talk —”

“What the hell do you want me say, Rey?” Ben burst out, stepping past her into the kitchen. Kenobi and Luke were the snooping sorts; having a conversation partly in the hallway would cause curious glances. His face became red, eyes aflame with annoyance. “That you fucking broke my heart that night? Because that’s what you did.”

Her chest tightened at his words. Deep down, she knew she caused a similar pain but to hear him say those exact words… she knew she’d been cruel no matter how just so she felt.
Collecting her thoughts from the winding punch of his confession, Rey lifted her gaze to his dark one. “I wasn’t ready and neither were you,” she defended, surprised by the amount of pain cracking through his voice.

“I understand that, I completely understand that,” he explained furiously, little veins protruding along his neck. “But that doesn’t change how I felt in that moment and the after effects of it.”

“Then how did you feel?” she shot back, both confused and upset at his yelled explanation. He was talking, communicating and she need to hear the rest, to understand him and the feelings behind his actions.

“Like shit and broken and helpless because you are the only person I ever chose to love and actively chose to love day after day, and it felt like you didn’t want that,” Ben admitted, frustrated tears fighting for victory in his eyes.

“But I do want that!” Rey croaked, her throat tight with unshed tears. “I always wanted that, and I want that from you—I just, you fucking scared me, because—because I finally had something to lose and I don’t want to lose you, Ben. I never want to lose you!”

“Good, because I don’t want to fucking lose you too!” he shouted back, his anger dying as he finished his sentence, struggling to catch his breath.

“Good,” Rey repeated quietly. She blinked several times, an awkward yet freeing silence falling between the two. Heart pounding, all she wanted to be was in his arms, feeling him begging for her embrace with his gaze. Determinedly, she walked up to him...before suddenly coming to a halt a couple of inches away. His face pinched not quite comprehending why she stopped. She cleared her throat, running into a familiar situation. “I—I uh, wanted to do that stupid rom-com thing where I run into your arms, but then I realized you are massive and—”

“Oh, for the love of God,” Ben muttered shaking his head and rolling his eyes.

In a blink of an eye he reaching down and forward, easily lifting Rey off her feet. Her legs immediately wrapping around his torso securely, not in the least worried with Ben’s arms holding her. Not waiting another moment, she leaned into a kiss, Ben eagerly meeting her halfway.

“Hey you guys are missing the—”

Luke stopped at the sight of the two, neither Rey or Ben stopping their embrace at his entrance. Grinning cheekily, he left the room. They were apparently in the middle of their own celebrating.

Chapter End Notes

So, I will be the first to admit, there are parts I love and there are parts I do not love in this chapter, but I feel this is the best way for things to go. BUT A LOT HAPPENED AND WE NEED TO UNPACK IT!!!!

Also did anyone catch the little nod to Rey and Ben’s first kiss ;)

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers :D
I saw your future. Just the shape of it, but solid and clear.

Chapter Summary

Vignettes and time passage and changes...so many changes.

Chapter Notes

Well, second to last chapter fam. I am try my best not cry since it is not the last but...wow I never thought I'd get this far. So many things come full circle in this chapter. We get a few answers and some fluff. Happy Ending on the horizon.

Gah, I need to stop rambling.

Anyways, typos will be fixed at a later date.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Two more semesters?”

“Two more semesters,” Rey said for the third time that morning.

“And then done?” Ben asked, his eyes widening a fraction at the implication of his words. “Unless you want to go to grad school—I full support whatever you want to do, as it is your life and I just want to be par—”

“Shut up,” Rey rolled her eyes playfully, but her tone remained stern. “I don’t know about grad school. It’s an option, but I don’t know.”

“It’s okay not knowing.” Reaching across the table, he gently squeezed her hand. A small, soft smile greeted him back.

They were the only two up the morning after New Years Eve. Coffee and croissants laid on the table, the two eating and talking quietly. Slowly figuring everything out because if they were going to do this—a relationship, a real healthy relationship—they needed to be on the same page. For once, Ben was willing to talk about how he felt and Rey opened up about her thoughts.

A general consensus came in their hushed conversations—it was going to be tough, long distance was inevitable, and *it was worth it.*

“I don’t want to transfer,” she declared, her chin held high.

“I wasn’t going to ask you to,” Ben assured her, honesty shining in his dark eyes. “I know you love it there.”

Ahch-To was *home.* It was where she met Finn and worked with Han. It was where she went to
school and fully became herself. Ahch-To was comforting, it held all the relationships she longed for in her life…except for one. But everything there reminded her of him even Ben was not there—he left fingerprints on everyone and everything she knew. A living ghost she wanted to be with her in the flesh, but asking him to move back to Ahch-To—it felt too much. Specifically, too much to ask of him to come back to his hometown and wait for her to finish school.

Rubbing soothing circles into the space between his thumb and index finger, she felt the warmth and tenderness of his hold. Despite her hesitance, Rey knew she needed to at least voice her thoughts on the matter.

“I…would you ever move back to Ahch-To?” she said slowly, gaging Ben’s reaction. He remained still, however his hold on her hand did not waver. “Even if it was for a little while?”

He lifted his head, eyes connecting with hers, both pained and hopeful. He intertwined their fingers, lifting and pressing his lips to the back of her hand. A warm dancing tingle played against her skin where his lips pressed lovingly.

“Can you give me until April?” he murmured against her hand. “I promised Poe and Amilyn I’d help with the wedding and I have a couple of things to take care of back in New York. Like a house and an Uncle,” he chuckled towards the end, dropping their hands back on the table. “If I could do sooner, I would, but I have responsibilities I need to follow through on.”

**Compromise.** She could compromise. April was only a few months; she’d be going to school and working. The time would fly by if she tried her best to keep busy. Plus, she was starting to like this truly self-assured version of herself, someone who wasn’t afraid to make changes in her life based off of want and need, rather than survival.

“I like the idea of April.”

He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to her forehead, “Me too.”

“Were they always like that?” Kenobi asked Luke, his gaze on Rey and Ben outside walking around the yard with each other. “Before their break and reconciliation?”

They’d been attached at the hip since the previous night, Ben never more than a few feet away from Rey and vice versa. Over the last day and a half, the older man was keenly aware of the love and affection between the young couple, but there was something truly different in their partnership.

Kenobi saw Anakin and Padme fall in love, along with Anakin’s demise into self-revulsion and seclusion. His dear friend worshiped the ground his wife walked on, and would do anything to keep her safe and *his*. Jealousy played cruel tricks on the couple, Anakin at time extremely insecure of his relationship with Padme, to the point he’d question her faithfulness.

Heartbreak did not even begin to explain Padme’s reaction.

In his time, Kenobi witnessed the aggressive and tender connection between Han Solo and Leia Organa. Arguments speckled their relationship along with sweet moments that never seemed to last long. While incredibly right for each other, they could at many time be wrong for each other. Too stubborn, a struggle to understand compromise—they argued for days over what to name their son,
until he jokingly said to name the poor boy ‘Benjamin’.

Oddly enough, they agreed.

Then the cycle of arguing, push and pulling, continued. And still continued to even on that very day.

Now Rey’s parents—a whirlwind romance, of both wonder and toxicity. While not an extremely religious man, Kenobi prayed for his granddaughter to never experience such heartbreak and cruelty in her life from a lover.

But seeing her with Ben…Kenobi knew she was in good hands. The boy looked at her as though she hung the stars in the sky and brought the waving seas to her mercy. He’d never seen a man look upon a woman in such a way, only in the faintest hints in the sweet, tired world of his beloved novel.

In a way, Rey and Ben were his most cherished creations brought to life. A young girl, fighting for her place in the world who intentionally yet unintentionally brings the lost boy back to his family. Bittersweet, ambiguous endings would never suit such a duo; there was a promise with each glance and touch, devotion without words.

“I…I don’t know,” Luke said, answering Kenobi’s previous question. “I never saw Rey and Ben together before, well before Thanksgiving. The thought of them together, even as friends felt far-fetched.” He hummed disappointedly at himself. “But I had a feeling the moment I saw them together, they’d be each other’s greatest joys and pains.”

“We all need something to live for…” Kenobi muttered, eyeing his friend and former student conspicuously before turning back to Rey and Ben. The couple were a good few yards away, talking in hush tones to one another. “You always knew who she was, did you not?”

Luke’s face darkened. “I don’t—”

“She looks like Winter; how could you not?”

An exasperated sigh left the older Skywalker.

“Just because I cared for your daughter, doesn’t mean anything now. She married and had a child with another man—” He hissed at a harsh gust of wind, shaking his head. “Did I hate Rey in the beginning because she looked like a woman I could never have, and then to top it off had a last name of her as well? It felt like the universe was mocking me,” he grumbled halfheartedly.

His lips pinched grumpily, his beard making him appear far grizzlier than his younger years. In those days Luke often looked like a kicked puppy when upset; most from the Skywalker line did.

“Winter did care for you,” Kenobi spoke after a moment, letting his former student’s frustration simmer down. “In the times we did talk, she said considered you a mentor, her greatest confidant.”

Determined, Luke remained neutral, turning his head up to the clouding sky.

He’d initially been against the relationship, Rey and Ben’s. If they danced around topics and raised hellish arguments like Han and Leia, or loved quickly and foolishly like Anakin and Padme, then their situation reminded Luke far too much of his and Winter’s. A mentorship that almost became more, but she made it clear as rain she did only viewed him as an older brother and nothing more. A person to look up to, someone who understood familial struggles, to be a connection to her family during her bouts of estrangement. Hopelessly Luke played along, foolishly believing one
day she’d change her mind and come running to him to finally settle down. How could he not fall under her brash, witty charm? While nearly ten years his junior, she could care out interesting conversation and her bright hazel eyes knew how to hold his attention longer than most women.

Luke feared for Ben would fall for a similar set of hazel eyes and wounded for life to their unrelenting warmth.

However, Rey was different and Ben was not him. And for that, he was grateful.

“They should marry before I pass,” Kenobi mused bluntly.

Luke chortled, his grand laughter echoing across the empty expanse. Silently, he smirked at the old man and simply nodded.

“Let’s do letters.”

“Huh?” Ben mumbled into his pillow, cracking an eye at Rey.

She was laying partially on top of him, her head propped up on his chest. Lazily, her pointer finger drew nonsensical circles by his collar. They’d gone to bed a couple hours ago, everyone in the manor turning in early for the night. As usual Rey bundled up in an unnecessary amount of blankets, but Ben didn’t mind, missing her little habits and quirks.

Blinking blearily at her, he swallowed his dry mouth away. “Letters? What are you talking about?” He asked mid-yawn.

“We’d always email or text message each other, but I really liked the postcards. I liked writing little messages to you.” Carefully she placed a kiss on his neck, burrowing deeper into his warmth. Her bright eyes lifted back to him, begging him to consider.

“I mean I liked them too, but I’ll miss seeing your face and hearing your voice,” he admitted. Gently he tucked her loose chestnut hair behind her ear, his hand lingering by her chin and ear.

“To just rely on written letters? It just doesn’t feel right.”

Lifting her eyes, she smiled lightly, the gesture bringing comfort to his flittering heart. “Then we won’t. We can still call and talk and message, but how about the letters being something extra? Something…nice. Things I don’t know about you, stories about your life—”

“You know plenty—”

“But I want to know more,” she nudged him with her elbow. “There is nothing wrong with that Ben.”

His face nuzzled into her hair, breathing in the lovely scent of honey and lavender shampoo while he still could. “I can do letters; very old timey of us.”

She giggled tiredly into his neck, her breaths tickling his skin. After a few moments, her breathing evened, her cold nose pressed near his pulse.

Without thought, he wrapped his arms tighter around her shoulders
Saying goodbye was difficult for the two, but there was a bittersweet warmth to the departure. Because this was not a goodbye forever, or an ‘I love you, bye,’ but a goodbye with a promise of longevity. A promise both where both are aware of the other’s desires and needs.

Dare she say, Rey kind of liked this goodbye.

“Just kiss already. We have a flight to catch,” Luke called out from behind them the entryway. Both Ben and Luke had a late flight on the 3rd, but train rides and connections to the airport caused the earlier leave. While disappointing to separate so soon after coming back together, Rey knew she could not ask Ben to stay longer, even a day or two. Sticking to schedules and not dropping everything for the other seemed important now, considering how often they’d attempt such an act a few months back.

Peaking the side of Ben’s shoulder, Rey caught Luke’s impatient gaze.

She then flipped him off.

Ben chuckled into her hair.

“You know you probably shouldn’t do that. I’d get him more upset,” he murmured to her, arms wrapped around her waist, holding her close. Ever since New Year’s, they’d been in a constant state of touch and embrace. She wasn’t too sure if they were making up for lost time or simply on a high from each other’s presence and words. Maybe it was both; Rey definitely felt it’d been both.

Nuzzling into his chest, she playing with the ends of his hair. “I know, but I have an entire semester to give pay back on and he can’t do anything now,” she shrugged, a playful smile on her lips.

“Okay, I agree that is valid,” Ben said through a chuckled, no doubt remembering the hellish circumstances Luke put Rey through. The beginning of the fall semester almost seemed a life time away when she thought too long about it. “All I ask is you are not like that forever, because I think I am starting to like my uncle again.”

“Wow,” she said, elongating the word teasingly. “I never thought I’d hear that.”

“Yeah, well…” Ben dropped the matter, pressing another kiss to her temple.

Over the last few months, Rey had her own feelings and issues with how the Solo and Skywalker’s interacted, or truly the lack of interaction. Misconceptions and misunderstandings were a bound. Everyone believed their own interpretation of events and interactions were gospel for years. Ignorantly, Rey thought maybe some reunions would solve these issues, however fleeting they were. Clearly issues weren’t solved, probably would never be solved, but everyone was working towards somewhere. Acceptance and moving on seemed to be the growing trend in Ben’s family, and Rey could not help but feel a little proud despite her own misgivings with Luke.

“Message me when you get there,” she said, pulling away to get a good look at him.

Ben’s lips quirked before a full smile emerged. “Absolutely.”

“Eat the peanuts for me.”
“Of course,” he rolled his eyes, “I will not think to do anything else.”

“It looks gorgeous!” Rey cheered, acting as surprised as she could when Rose thrust her hand in front of her. The ring was truly stunning, simple and elegant with a dark band, perfect for Rose a practical woman through and through. A ring Finn agreed wholeheartedly to when Rey pointed it out three weeks prior.

After a long flight and bus ride, she came home to a buzzing and glowing couple, Rose and Finn practically vibrating from excitement when she entered the apartment. They recounted the entire events of the proposal, from how Finn stumbled over his words during the small New Year’s Eve get together at Paige’s apartment to him actually getting on his knee and Rose saying ‘yes’ before he even asked the question.

A perfectly imperfect proposal for the wonderfully paired couple. Rey did not expect any less.

Eyes squinting, Rose dropped her hand from Rey’s loose hold.

“You knew, didn’t you?” she asked bluntly.

Rey winced, “Eh, yeah. I did.” She and Finn shared an apologetic look. Rose was a smart one, but it took great effort for the woman to not find out. To the point Finn and Rey left to the jewelry store two towns over during Rose’s crazy back to back shifts, convincing her manager to keep her a little longer when they were rushing to make it back before she noticed the two were no longer in town. “But I am so happy for you! And it is beautiful and I can’t wait for the wedding,” she said with a bursting smile for the two.

Rolling her eyes good-naturedly, Rose pulled the girl into a tight hug. “Thank you, thank you—knowing Finn he would have panicked and picked the first ring he saw.” The two women giggled at the correct observation. Finn froze the moment they entered the store, Rey needing to drag him away from the entrance and to the ring cases towards the back.

“Which now leads me to ask,” Finn interjected, a large grin on his face, “Would you be my best woman Rey?”

Her eyes widened, “What? I mean, of course, but wouldn’t you want someone else or my Lando, I mean he is your Uncle—”

“Nope,” Finn shook his head, “You are my best friend and I want you in my wedding,” he put his arm around Rose, the two looking at her full of warmth, “We want you in our wedding.”

“You guys,” she mumbled in near tears, standing up straighter to pull them into a group hug. “Of course I’d be your woman of honor—wait do you have a date set?” She asked pulling away, digging for her phone in her pocket.

Frowning a little at Rey’s haste, Rose answered, “We’re thinking an October wedding, nothing too big.”

“Perfect, Ben will be back in time—”

“Ben?” Rose and Finn exclaimed, their outcries overlapping awkwardly.
“Wait-wait-wait—What do you mean ‘Ben’? Like Ben-Ben, Ben-Tree-Ben?”

“What other Ben?” Finn commented, earning a light slap on the arm from Rose.

Rose gapped widely when Rey didn’t respond.

“When the hell did that happen?” Rose exclaimed.

“Oh,” Rey pursed her lips, tilting her head to the side. “You know, we can talk about this later—let’s focus on you and the engagement—”

“I want to know if Reylo is back together!” Rose cried out indignantly, causing Finn and Rey to flinch. “My heart is riding on this.”

“Reylo? What the hell is that?” Rey blinked, befuddled by the term.

Sighing dramatically, Rose began to answer while Finn looked defeated. It must be a reoccurring rant. “Reylo is the ship name I made for you and Ben. I tried ReyBen but it sounded like Rayband, and no. Just no.” She shook her head with a disgusted frown. “So I combined your name and his pseudonym—Kylo.”

“She went on for days for a couple name, I cried tears of joy when she settled on that one,” Finn explained tiredly.

“OH,” Rey commented, a little lost for words.

Meanwhile, Finn and Rose waited on her expectantly.

“Uh, Ben and I are back together—sort of—you know what there was a lot kissing and yelling involved, but we agreed we are really going to try. And he may potentially be moving here in the spring,” she announced quietly, suddenly embarrassed by the amount of attention her friends were bestowing upon her. “It’s both new and comfortable and…I think…I think we will be okay. And I can say that with some confidence.”

A shrill squeal escaped Rose.

“Thank god! My life is complete!”

“Nope, Rey and Ben are back together and I can move on with my life peacefully!”

Ungracefully, Rose brought Rey into another hug, the two rocking side to side. While not the most touchy feely person in the world, Rey accepted it, feeling a little lighter knowing her friends were happy for her in the same way she was happy for them.

January 19, 2019

Ben,

Okay I know I already told you this but I need to just express it more…
descriptive, intimate level—

I love Rose, but I am loosing my mind over these Best Woman duties and it has only been a three weeks! I understand Paige is on the other side of the country (By the way, how is Paige? Are her and Phasma doing well? I hear little things but Rose likes to keep things zipped shut when it comes to her sister and I can’t help but be nosey sometimes…) and she can’t be here for all the Maid of Honor responsibilities, but WOW.

Rose is the type of girl who planned her wedding as a child and kept a binder of it. And while I love her enthusiasm, I don’t think I can ever be prepared for such an endeavor.

I say if the time ever comes for me, Las Vegas Chapel.

I’m kidding.

Or am I?

By the way, I have my first REAL article for the university newspaper in the package—that’s why the letter is sent in a package this time than a good ole envelope. I know you have probably read it online, but I figured you’d like the real thing.

Oh and your mother mentioned you wanted a recipe from your Grandma Breha’s personal cookbook. She wrote it on the card attached.

Rey

“It is a couple of weeks, maybe a month depending on how well she is doing,” Principal Jarrus explained, “And Mr. Ackbar can not sing your praises enough. So would you like to be a long-term sub for AP English?”

The high school was small and private, only a thirty minute commute from his house, not to mention a decent paying gig. For the last month and half, Ben had been substituting for Chancellor Academy for various classes, but mostly English. It was only a few times a week, it worked well within his writing schedule and bizarrely enough, Ben enjoyed teaching.

Sure, students didn’t always listen—it was high school for crying out loud—but those who did made the work worthwhile. A part of him considered even going back to school to get his credentials, or depending on if he wanted to teach college level, his Masters in English or Creative Writing.

A fleeting though of he and Rey attending grad school together entered his mind.

That would be…something. Different, but maybe a good different.

Of course, he still had his novel to work on and find a published but all writer’s needed day jobs and other passions. A purpose beyond simply writing.

“Yes,” Ben found himself answering, “I can be long-term.”
January 30, 2019

Rey,

Paige is fine; I had lunch with her a couple of days ago. She and Phasma are great. Hux on the other hand...let’s just say I have had too many drunk dials.

Planning a wedding is awful, I have complained enough to you about Poe and Amilyn. Speaking of them, I finally got a ‘festive’ garden they can get married at and a date that works. It’s a week day, but beggars can’t be choosers. They sound okay with the date change, it’s only a few days earlier and a honeymoon hasn’t been planned yet, so not too bad.

Vegas? No.

Elopement? Yes.

Let’s keep these for future reference.

And tell my mom thanks for the recipe. Uncle Luke’s birthday is coming up and for as long as I can remember she has delegated someone to make the cake for him. Breha was never Luke’s mother, but my mom made it a tradition for her and Luke to share the cake on their birthday.

Which reminds me—Can you bake the cake for my mom? I would usually do it, but seeing as I am here and she is over there, I need someone else to do it. I know Chewie would make it for Luke but…I think it might be nice if you did this for her.

Text me when you get the letter so I can send you a picture of the recipe. I’ll forget otherwise.

Thanks,

Ben

The card was obnoxiously pink and large red hearts decorated the front. Opening the card a loud rendition of Elvis’ *Burning Love* blasted through the card. Momentarily terrified, he slapped the firm, layered card closed.

From the breakfast nook, Luke raised an eyebrow. Shaking his head, he dropped his gaze back down to his tablet.

Frowning, Ben checked the address again—yup, it was from Rey.

Deciding to humor her and himself, he opened the card again.

In red and comic sans font was: *Happy Valentine’s Day to my hunky, hunk of burning love!*

Below the typed out message was the real sentiment in Rey’s loopy and messy penmanship—

*I know this is cheesy, but we can’t spend Valentines with each other so I thought a card would help!*
Love you, bye

Rey

P.S. You will need to make up for the lack of date later when you are in town ;) Or when I am in town? You know what, which ever happens first! There, that’s what we’ll do.

He grinned, picking up his phone to call her.

“So I got your card—”

“I sent that while I was drunk!”

“Yeah, I don’t believe you.”

“You’re what?” Rey blinked owlishly at Finn, her edits on her next article long forgotten.

“Moving in with Rose,” Finn repeated slowly. Across from her, he leaned against her bedroom doorway, arms crossed over his chest.

There was something oddly deja-vu about the situation. She’d been complaining about the time pressing edits on her next article, Mara giving great suggestions on flow of the piece when Finn broke the news.

“Peanut—are you okay?” He asked hesitantly, shifting from foot to foot.

“Yeah…” She mumbled dazed.

She…she was getting roommate dumped.

Entering the room, he took a seat across from her, taking her hand in his. “Rey, listen, you are my best friend,” Finn pressed his lips together, a sad apologetic smile emerging on his lips.

Blinking, Rey swallowed tightly. Her hand slackened in his. Logically, she…she knew this day would come, but she didn’t know when. Naively, she believed it be much later. Much, much later. Maybe right before the wedding. Not seven months before the wedding.

“And I moved in because Poe and I broke-up.” His watery chuckled filled the room, then a breathy exhale. He sat up straighter, trying to be stronger. But they both knew that was Rey’s job in the friendship. That’s why they worked so well together. “Ironically, we are both getting married this year, to two very different people.” Licking her lips, Rey nodded once giving the okay for Finn to continue. “You needed a roommate and I needed my friend, and…I think we were exactly the type of stability we needed for that time.” Neither spoke for a moment, feeling the weight of the last months, hell the last couple of years settle over them. “But…but I think you and I both know we should have stopped living with each other a long time ago.”

Silent tears spilled down her cheeks, Rey avoiding Finn’s soft, understanding eyes.

“I know,” she said quietly, eyes flickering to him momentarily before dropping back down to her lap where her favorite grey pillow sat. “I know,” she repeated more confidently.
A series of emotions flared through her—anger, confusion at first...understanding, gratefulness however became triumphant in the flurry of heart and mind.

“Finn,” Rey said shakily, “I love you Peanut and you’ll always have a home with me.”

Face tear stained, he smiled brightly back. “I love you Peanut, and you’ll always have a home with me.”

The collapsed in a steady hug, simply holding each other for a moment.

An end of an era, a chapter closed...all could not surmise the feeling of parting with a found brother or sister.

“That’s bullshit,” Ben declared, lowering the volume of the television. They were both watching Breakfast at Tiffany’s. Surprisingly, he and Rey had both seen the film before that night but Rey insisted on watching it together to have the full “Ben Solo Viewing Experience”. Little did she know it was Ben’s least favorite of the Audrey Hepburn films, which meant grumbles and arguments about the characters the entire film.

On the laptop screen, Rey shrugged. BB’s tail then wacked her face, she pushing him away with a gentle shove. Ben snorted at her misfortune.

“I think it is sweet... in a strange way,” Rey mused.

“She calls him ‘Fred’ after her deceased brother, and flirts with him...That’s borderline Oedipus complex.”

“Isn’t Oedipus complex the one where the son is in love with his mother—”

“Yes, but it has similar tones and themes—”

“I think you just don’t like their relationship,” Rey said interrupting Ben mid-rant.

Ben continued his complaints on the film, a heat of indignation to his words. “And the racial and cultural insensitivity—”

“I mean I hate that too. I think everyone does, Ben,” she reminded him with a slight eyeroll, “But you don’t like Holly and Paul together. Which is fine, but you don’t like them together because she uses him and treats him like he is a mere friend when he is so much more. But I think you are missing the point—”

“Me missing the point—”

“She is afraid of love and hides it behind a larger than life personality,” Rey finished before he could get another word into his endless argument.

The final scene began to play out, Holly and Paul looking for Cat in the pouring rain.

“Poor cat,” Ben mumbled, picking up another stack of paper to grade. He only had a week and half left with his long-term sub situation, and a week left to finish grading the paper he assigned his...the students. Not his students. Right. “He’s the character I actually care about in this film.”
“You hate cats.”

“But I like that cat.”

More shuffle of papers. Most of the kids in AP English were just taking the course for the credit, some even asked if it would transfer well, and some he told the truth (No—they hardly ever transfer the credits well and you’ll probably have to retake the course in college) while other’s he nodded and said ‘yes’ because they’d probably cry if they found out their hard work was for nothing outside of learning now.

He aggressive marked the paper before him, using a purple pen he found in his office. Purple wasn’t his color of choice, but he must have swiped it from Amilyn when he last saw her.

“Would putting on Roman Holiday make you feel better?” Rey suddenly asked.

“Why would I need to feel better?”

“Because you look like a murderous kicked puppy.”

Looking up at the screen, he noticed Rey’s concerned gaze. She hugged her pillow close to her chest, watching him with sad eyes.

“I’m usually not compared to a puppy.”

“Hm,” she pursed her lips, before smiling softly, “You will always be a puppy to me.”

Sighing deeply, Ben pushed up his glasses, looking at her through the screen. “I…like my job.”

“I know,” she said full of warmth, “You have been a lot happier. The happiest in some cases since you started subbing.”

He didn’t speak up, his mouth a firm line, as he struggle to comprehend what he was feeling.

“It’s okay to like other things Ben, and to get fulfillment from them,” she said comfortingly, “I love writing, but I also love working and tinkering on cars.”

Her quiet explanation made sense. “…But I never thought I would be able to experience something like that,” he murmured into the room. “I think I might want to go back to school…to teach higher level.”

“Really?” she breathed.

“When you think about it, I a way it’s ironic how you have to go to school in order to be able to teach—”

“I think teaching is perfect for you—well besides writing,” she said, her genuineness shining through the distance. “You…are amazing at teaching. I don’t think I’d be the writer or person I am if you hadn’t mentored me. And I am saying this as your former unformal student, not as your girlfriend.”

He raised his eyebrows, lips quirking. “‘Girlfriend’ sounds juvenile, I’ve never even heard you refer to yourself as such—”

“Fine, partner, whatever,” she huffed aggravated by him despite her blooming smile. “My point is I am objectively speaking and supporting whatever you decide.”
A wave of relief washed over him, not sure when panic over her response took hold over his gut. A silent ‘thank you’ went unsaid between the two as she blew a little innocent kiss to the camera. Ben shook his head.

“I think I need to watch Roman Holiday to cleanse my palate after Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” he announced, setting aside his grading. Whistling once, Trixie came ambling over from the foot of the bed to his side. Petting her and pressing kisses to her head, Ben began searching for the film on Netflix.

“Ah, yes the classic,” Rey mused, looking for the film on her end as well. “I’ve never been to Rome.”

“Me neither.”

“We should go one day,” she said, something softer and hopeful in her tone, however offhanded her statement. Ben felt his heart pick up pace; he made a mental note for the future.

“Yeah, we should.”

“Hey, kid,” Han called out from above the car Rey was working under. “You got a moment?”

Sliding out from under the car, she looked up at him with furrowed eyebrows, grease staining her forehead. While she and Han had remained in their comradery, there was a subtle shift in their relationship. Before she considered Han as someone close to family, but not quite. She didn’t share everything with him but appreciated his concern for her. However, she was Ben’s…partner as her stubborn idiot of a love decided to label them, and Rey was brought deeper into the Solo-Skywalker fold. Sundays were with Han watching the sea lions. A few lunches were spent with Leia, the chatting about everything and nothing. Rey spent weekends helping them repaint the room in their house and move furniture in and out. Take some of Ben’s belongings from his room as per his parents request and Ben’s blessing. His parents wanted to clean up the rooms and renovate.

Not so subtlety they hinted they wanted to make Ben’s childhood room into a children’s playroom or nursery. Rey remained flushed and embarrassed at the prospect. Stuttered explanations—“We aren’t even in the same time zone!”—were mentioned, but fell upon deaf ears.

Rey tried to avoid the subject at all costs, and thankful it wasn’t brought to her attention again.

Things were better between the two, Han and Ben. Weekly gruff and brief phone calls transpired from the Solo men. Neither Leia or Rey pressed for more deciding to work with what they got.

“Of course,” she sat up carefully, not to let too much blood rush to her head. “What’s up?”

“Amilyn and Poe’s wedding is coming up—which I am still stunned by that pairing,” Han said a little lost on how the couple came to be. Rey breathed a chuckle. “And I need you to call in a favor with our favorite person.”

She nodded in understanding. “You don’t want to stay in a hotel?”

Han shook his head, “Leia insists we stay in the house over there, but doesn’t want to be the barer
of news... she says he can’t say ‘no’ to you.” His smug knowing grin did nothing to convince Rey of Ben’s approval.

“I can call...” She trailed off, stuffing her hands into her pockets. She pulled out her cell phone with her right hand, holding it out to Han. “But I think your son will say ‘yes’ if you asked him nicely.”

Han’s mouth formed a hard line.

Still, Rey held the phone out.

“I know what you are doing,” he stated bluntly hands on his hips.

Rey raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

“Leia has conned me into this trick several times.” His eyes narrowed on her.

Rey stood unflinching, waiting patiently.

Han snatched the phone from her. “You are lucky us Solo men are terrified of strong women,” he grumbled, swiping open her phone. “Where can I find his number?”

“He is the last person I called,” Rey informed him with a bright, satisfied smile.

“You have my son labeled as ‘Prince Puppy Dog Eyes’?”

Judgement dripped in his voice, a hint of amusement in his eyes.

Rey stuttered, “Call your son, goddamn it!”

Flustered, she turned on her heel and went to the break room, but stopped right by the door. Hiding by the cracked door, she leaned in and listened.

“Son, your mother and I want to stay in the house during our visit,” Han stated bluntly. He paused for a moment, Ben answering the demand. Han briefly frowned before continuing, “Seriously? It was that easy? Fine, I’ll see you in two weeks, kid.”

Mentally counting to twenty, Rey then walked back out.

“So how did it go?” she sang out with a knowing grin.

Han turned to her and handed back the phone. “We’re staying in the house,” he said lowly, ignoring her outbursts of smug glee. “Whatever. Get back to work, kid.”

The smile remained in Rey’s face as she got back to work on the car. Only a couple of more weeks and then she’d see Ben again, and maybe not everything would implode for his family.

Twinkle lights filled the garden and smooth jazz music filled the air. After stressful planning and listening to both Amilyn and Poe cry over each other and argue and kiss and make up—honesty Ben needed them to go on a honeymoon to simply get away from them—the wedding went off without a hitch.
Unbelievable, but true.

Unfortunately, in his rush of somehow taking over the duties of maid or honor and best man, Ben never had the opportunity to greet his parents or Rey when they flew in that morning. Luke was left to pick them up from the airport and help them get settled. Rey sent a picture of her things thrown about his room causing both joy and headache to emerge. The woman was going to be the wonderful death of him. He was anxious to see her in person; it'd been well over three months, and it'd been too long. For the last three days he reminded himself to not feel awkward or be awkward when seeing her but he knew it would not last once she stood before him. Ben knew he'd be a stuttering fool for a good hour before becoming somewhat normal around her.

All chaos considering, Ben ended up getting ready at the venue instead of at home, waiting for the priest and jazz band. All of whom arrived on time, followed by the guests. Ben was suddenly gratefully the couple decided to keep everything in one location rather than all over town. He’d be dead if that happened.

Before the ceremony, Ben caught a fleeting glance of Rey only to be pulled over by a frantic Poe. The poor guy thought he lost the ring.

But Ben had both as per request...three weeks ago.

Honestly, both usually level headed individuals became chicken’s with their heads cut off during the planning and lead up to their wedding.

Thankfully the vows (both personal and tear-jerking) were said and kisses were exchanged. At least that’s what Ben believed, parts of the ceremony were a blur, too stressed and tired to fully enjoy the event, but nonetheless happy and proud.

Which was why he camped himself out on the bench by the small bar, drinking cocktails to loosen up for once an not panic for the sake of the bride and groom.

“Hey,” her teasing voice called out to him. Looking up, Ben found Rey standing a couple feet away, teetering a bit on her heels, “this is a beautiful wedding,” inching closer, she nudged him with the toe of her shoe, “knowing you, how much did you really help?”

A bark of laughter escaped Ben, his usual perturbed-somber expression becoming youthful instantaneously. Rey’s knowing wince turned grin caused his breath to stutter, carefully averting his gaze away. However, his eyes trailed back to linger on her despite his efforts.

He rubbed his sweaty palms on his knees considering her question. “I did all the important stuff they didn’t want to do—call all the venues, decide on the catering. Lots of phone calls and hastily explaining I was the godson of the bride,” he scratched behind his ear, “it was a bit time consuming, more than I thought.”

Sensing she was hovering, Ben scooted over on the bench, giving Rey a silent offer to sit.

With a tiny turn of her lips, she sat beside him. Her skirt proofed up dramatically the moment she sat, almost airbag like in density. Fussily, she patted the fabric back down, sharing an aggravated look with Ben.

“Your mother loaned me the dress.” She gently smoothed the fabric once it was no longer fight for dominance over her body. “She said it was her mother’s—I was too nervous to ask which,” she admitted, pinching and poking at her cuticles.
“I…think it might be Padme’s,” he considered.

Barely used and something of nostalgic high fashion, the longer he gazed upon her the more he believed it to be his maternal grandmother’s. Periwinkle made Rey’s sharp edges appear softer, more girlish than he’d ever seen her. A what-could-have-been if she knew and held a relationship with her grandfather.

“You…you’re beautiful,” he breathed, unable to look away for her. Half a second later he realized how awful his words may be interpreted and began to backpedal on his words, “Well, you’re always beautiful but—”

“I know,” she interjected before he could make a further fool of himself. A small smile graced her lips, edging between somewhere of shy and confident. Quaky shoulders informed Ben it was more likely the former. “You look handsome yourself, but you’re always handsome to me, even when you look like a nerdy lumberjack.”

“Uh, thanks?” He chuckled, subconscious of his grey suit. Poe wanted all the men in the wedding part to wear light grey suits, Ben needing to go out of his way to purchase something that wasn’t a darker tone.

Both seemed to forgo their usual glasses, opting for contacts and more put together looks than their haggard attire of writer and college student.

Soft jazz music played in the garden, fairy lights twinkling; fading in and out with each steady breath.

“Do you want to dance?” he decides to ask before he lost all courage.

“Absolutely,” she beamed.

Rey held out her hand to him, Ben taking her palm in his.

With his heart nearly beating out of his chest, he let her lead them to the small dance floor. Gradually, they moved into a sway, skirting around the edge of the crowd, preferring to be in their own bubble.

One hand rests firmly on his shoulder, while the other remained clasped lightly with his own. Shifting and stepping to the offbeat, dancing but not truly dancing. Something of an overgrown school dance; shy glances, sweaty palms, hesitant smiles.

Ben cleared his throat, a ‘um’ caught in his mouth, “Would you ever…would you ever want a wedding like this?” He finds himself asking the question with little prompting.

“No,” Rey answered rather quickly. Her hazel eyes dimmed, “I— I never really wanted to get married, well until…well you.” She peers back up at him.

Oh.

“Me too,” Ben agreed quietly, loud enough for only the space between them.

“I mean,” she adjusted her had in his, “all I would want is just me and you in the end. Nothing…” she intertwines their fingers, Ben feeling more at home the close she shuffles, “nothing else, really.”

He swallowed and nodded.
Good, they were on the same page. He liked how often they were on the same page these days.

Letting go of his hand, Rey wrapped her arms around his torso. Gently, she rested her cheek on his chest. His arms hovered for a second before he set them a top of upper and lower back. Holding her closer, he was able to smell her hair. His nose brushed against the top of her head as he bent to further cocoon in her radiating warmth. Ben refrained a shiver as her finger drew delicate circles along his back.

“I love you,” she mumbled into his chest, squeezing his tighter to her, trying to become one as their sway became an ebbing rocking motion.

The pads of his fingers feather over her collarbone up, his thumb caressing the juncture between her jaw and upper neck. Into her hair, he murmured the sentiment back, a kiss planted tenderly on her left temple. He wanted to hold her here, in this moment forever…yet be somewhere completely different.

The eyes of their friends and family constantly drifted toward the two throughout the night. Expecting a loud fight, a declaration of love—something extremely Ben and Rey an outburst of their unyielding love.

However, little did their loved one’s know, such acts were decidedly not Ben and Rey. Or at least that night they would not be committing such acts—they were at a wedding after all.

“Do you want to go for a walk?” He asked after ducking away from more peering eyes.

“Please,” she agreed, following his lead.

“So…how is everything—you know the stuff you don’t tell me over the phone or on videocall or in our letters?” Rey asked as they strolled through the empty, neighborhood streets.

“Not much…” he answered, “I tell you everything, there is nothing I don’t tell you.” He amended her statement, earning a playful glare in return.

“But the writing…?” Rey began, not sure where to go with her question. She knew he’d been writing again and was working as a substitute for the local school district. However, he rarely spoke in great detail of his writing, only sharing some snippets here and there of his current work.

Ben kicked a pebbled; it bounced around a few feet before rolling to a stop.

“It’s…it’s good,” he shrugged, hands fisted in his pockets, “I have an agent and an editor now. It’s weird saying that out loud still,” Ben eyes trailed from her to the barely-there stars, “My uncle has helped me with that. I think it might be his own form of repentance and salvation—finally giving his nephew respect and aid…” he shook his head, hair flopping a bit, “Not that—not that it really matters anymore; I’ve forgiven him. A long time ago, which is still really weird to think about.”

Listening to his calming silence, she held her arms tighter to her body.

They followed the path, Ben occasionally distracted by the arching and droops of the branches, but followed at a steady pace. Neither were too sure where.
“I’m happy for you, Ben,” Rey praised quietly, finally able to say it in person rather than over the phone. “You truly deserve happiness and the time to write, and for other’s to see your work.”

His eyes found hers as they came to a gradual stop by a playground hidden within the neighborhood. The fabric of her dress whoshed and waved with every step she’d take, Rey becoming the silent leader. Stepping carefully through the woodchips in her heels, she brought them to the swing set.

“I’m going to break this,” Ben mumbled, swinging the seat back and forth without sitting on the plastic seat. “If you haven’t noticed I am rather tall and mildly giant person.”

Grinning cheekily up at him from her swing, Rey’s eyes danced across his form.

“I noticed.”

Under her gaze, Ben felt the tell-tale signs of a burning blush on his neck and ears. In that moment Ben realized Rey would always leave him somewhat flustered, even for a fleeting second. Her eyes and smile knew him too well to not take advantage of his subconscious reaction.

She waved to the seat beside her. “Come on, I don’t think you’re going to break it Mr. Giant.”

With a kick of her feet, she began to swing a couple of feet—back and forth. A lack of gusto was in her movements, yet she did not seem to mind as the early spring winds picked up here and there as a gentle guide. Locks of her hair dropped out of its French twist, she appearing as the Rey he was more familiar with than the put together girl he’d been keeping company for the last couple of hours.

Swallowing his pride, Ben sat down on his swing. He let his feet rock him, listening for a slight creak. Two fully grown adults were not meant to play on children’s swings, yet the light smile and gleam in Rey’s eyes tempered down any objections swirling to be released.

“I…I wouldn’t have been able to do it without you,” Ben admitted.

To his left, Rey twisted on her seat to face him better.

Clenching and unclenching his fists around the cool chains on either side of him, Ben continued, “If it wasn’t for you I’d probably still be ignorant, working for an awful man, and slowly letting my life slip away.”

She tsked, “I think you’re being melodramatic,” she twisted the chains together again, spinning as she wound her swing up, “You would have figured it out sooner or later Ben. I’m not…I’m not your savior.”

He grunted, reminding himself to be patient—which wasn’t as difficult with Rey in comparison to other people in his life.

Leaning back, he allowed himself to swing a little more than complacent ebbing, “I’m not saying that—it wasn’t you who made me realize my life was fucked up or that I was a miserable, unhappy mess of a person. It was you and bunch of other crap that made me realize that I wanted to be more than my definition of a fuck-up because I had something to live for,” he sighed, slowing his swinging to a stop.

Wind brushed forcefully again, knocking both their hair from tamed arrangements.

She snuck a glance at him, “I’m something worth living for?”
“You’re everything to me.”

Neither spoke, simply sitting with each other. His eyes connected with hers and nothing else seemed to matter…because she was there, with him. They were just a boy and girl, comforted by each other’s mere presence. Comforted by being with their other half.

Shaking rustle of leaves woke them from their stupor. Rey looked over the playground, before dropping her gaze to her hands on her lap.

“Well…I feel the same way,” she spoke, her voice carried over my the wind. “I know…” Rey chewed on her upper lip, “I know we both said we needed more time, and I am glad we have kept our relationship intact because I have no idea,” she chuckled airlessly, the thought unfathomable, “what I’d do if you weren’t in my life, and I know sometimes it is stressful and annoying being so far away sometimes and I don’t know I am all emotional now because of the wedding…” she shook her head. Her expression wavered between elation and heartbreak, as though her heart struggled to understand the difference. “I don’t even know what I am saying.”

“I know,” Ben agreed, holding and squeezing his palms together. “I know what you are talking about.”

He sent her a water smile, his heart vibrating out of his chest the longer he held her gaze.

“It’s…it’s almost April,” she breathed, “and we said…”

“I—” Ben pinched his eyes closed, hoping Rey wasn’t asking what he thought she was asking, “I have honestly thought about it and I can go back to Ahch-To if that’s what you—”

“No!” She ended his concern with a flurry, eyes wide. “No, no I wouldn’t ask you to stay in Ahch-To if you don’t want to.”

“Rey,” Ben said her namely softly and deeply capturing her attention. “I—I just want to be where you are, being apart this time made me realize that. Really, truly realize that. I can go to school or substitute anywhere. I can write anywhere—”

She stood up from the swing, coming to stand in front of him.

“The if that is case, then I am asking you to move back to Ahch-To,” Rey declared, her head held high. “So we can try—” she scoffed, shaking her head. Her loose hair fanned out over her shoulders,” So we can truly to be together, because I love you too much to be like this—separated but together. Like, you said you’re my everything—”

Stumbling on the wood chips, Ben leaned up to capture Rey’s lips with his own. A subtle gasp escaped her, her hands flying to lock behind his neck, pressing back with fervor. Encouraged, his arms quickly wrapped around her waist to prevent her from tittering off her heels.

Slightly breaking the kiss, Ben rested his forehead against Rey’s. Gently he removed her hands from his neck and held them within his own. Thumb rubbing soothing circles into the back of her hand, reminding himself she was there, and ready—ready for whatever it was they needed, and for once wanted, to do.

“I know it’s not your favorite place—”

“Anywhere you are is my favorite place,” he admitted with teary ears. After a second he shook his head with a groan, “I sound like some dime-store romance novel. It’s disgusting.”
“I like it, I like it a lot,” she nodded said gazing up at him. “I’d take cheesy confessions of love over silence any day.”

Jovial laughter released from his chest, Ben pulling Rey closer into his arms. Unable to help himself, he pressed kisses into the crown of her head, relishing in her closeness.

“Good, because there might be more where that came from,” he muttered on to her temple as she nuzzled deeper into his arms.

Wind rustled, and chains quivered, but the warmth resting against Ben chest did not waver. He felt at home, her hair tickling his face and her forever cold nose pressing into his skin.

Chapter End Notes

Almost a 9k chapter. Wow. And yes, this is the beginning of happily ever after for our nerds *sobs*

Lots to unpack. Like...A LOT.

And did it feel like there were holes in some areas...well maybe because I am not completely done with this universe. I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH CHANGE OKAY! So expect some short oneshots in the future :D

And thank you, thank you, thank you to all who have read and commented and love this fic. It has warmed my heart and spirit to share this fic and experience the character growth with all you lovely readers. We are almost at the end, one more chapter.

Let me know what you think! Comments and kudos are always appreciated; I love discussing the fic with my readers :D
You're Not Alone; Neither Are You

Chapter Summary

The ending.

Chapter Notes

Here it is....the last chapter. It has been a journey friends!

Typos will be fixed later.

Please enjoy the last chapter of this delightful, heartfelt, angsty, humorous fic!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Fuck!” Another bang. “Goddamn it—who the fuck even follows these instruction!”

In the kitchen, Rey winced. She paused for a moment, waiting to hear if Ben needed help. After a moment, she heard the usual grumbles, but nothing worrisome. Shaking her head, she poured more coffee into her mug.

She’d been working on her last article for the semester before summer break. While she hoped to have it done before Ben arrived the other day, she became preoccupied with other matters. Like trying to figure out where to shove all his boxes he shipped periodically the last two weeks, or reading on how to train dogs to like each other.

They came to a very serious problem once they began unpacking his belongings; they had too many books. After all, Ben’s former apartment was practically a library. So many, many, many bookshelves were bought or commandeered (Finn left some of his furniture in the room to their advantage) for their collections. Most his academic and limited edition publishing’s were put on the bookshelves and organizers in Finn’s old bedroom, along with his desk and other office belongings. Her own literary analysis and craft books found themselves mixed with his, most of their literature safely tucked into the room they new deemed the office. Only, they wanted to keep their favorite books close on hand, which meant getting another bookshelf for their bedroom. Rey planned to put it together, but her article was on a deadline.

To her surprise, Ben insisted he could put together the new bookshelf. She didn’t think too long on it—the piece was only three by four feet, nothing too difficult to complete.

Except Ben had been trying to finish the task for the last two hours.

“He’s going to need my help, isn’t he?” She asked Trixie and BB, the two dogs curled up on their doggy bed together.

Trixie dropped her head into her paws, Rey taking that as a ‘yes.’

Skimming the article one last time, Rey sent the piece to Mara, shutting her laptop close right after.
Cautiously she left the kitchen to the bedroom, peaking her head through the doorway.

She smirked at the scene before her, raising a questioning eyebrow.

Ben was slouched on the floor, a book propped open his chest—*Jane Eyre*—his job left forgotten beside him. He didn’t even have the frame done.

“Do you want me to do it?” she asked, crouching down on the floor. She picked up the crumpled instructions by his foot, smoothing out the ball of paper.

“She’ll,” he muttered, bookmarking his page. “I will go and pick up lunch from Maz’s if you do this stupid thing,” he asked pathetically, standing up from the floor.

“Hm,” Rey’s lips quirked to the side considering as she began pulling all the pieces closer to her. “I guess I can…if you make sure to bring me muffin as well.”

Titling her head, she grinned up at him.

“Oh course,” he assured her, leaning down to press a quick kiss to her temple. He left the room with a small goodbye, Rey hearing the door open then close a few moments later.

With her main distraction in life gone, she went about putting together the bookshelf… and realized maybe Ben did have a point. The instructions were tedious and extremely detailed to the point of excessiveness. She struggled for a while to figure out if she actually needed a screw driver or if she could just use her hands.

Eventually, she was able to put the pieces together, starting to form something resembling the bookshelf in the packaging.

After about fifteen minutes, she finished the task and pushed it to the open spot beside the new bed. Han and Chewie helped bring the queen bed up earlier that week, and take her full size bed out. It was in the same exact location, but took up a little more room.

Setting the bookshelf securely against the wall, a peak of white paper at the bottom of the bed’s headboard caught her attention. She reached in the small space and grabbed the paper, surprised to see it was an envelope… addressed to *her*.

Flipping it over, she began to open it—

“Babe, I’m back!” Ben called out from the front door. “Maz decided to simply give us an entire batch of muffins as a welcome home present—”

“Muffins!” Rey squealed, dropping the envelope into one of the open, still packed boxes. She rushed out of the room, the thought of Maz’s delicious food on her mind.

“It needs to be done.”

“I…it’s going to be hard to say goodbye,” Ben practically whimpered, staring at his reflection. He rubbed his palm along his jawline longingly. “I like the facial hair—I look my age and for some reason, kids respect it.”
Sitting on the edge of the tub, Rey held the razor out to him.

“I love you, but it needs to go,” she said apologetically, “I am getting beard burn where beard burn should never be.”

He winced, taking the razor. “I know, and I have already made up for that,” he reminded her.

She passed him the shaving cream and watched as he began to lather it on his neck, chin, and jaw.

“Would you like to say a few words to my Self-care Beard before it is gone forever?” He asked, catching her eye in the mirror.

Sitting up straight, she nodded. “Self-care Beard—thank you for being there for my Ben when he was still on his road to self-discovery. Shaving takes too much time that could be spent writing or contemplating the existence of life, and you allowed Ben to do those things while in New York. But we are now in California and it is almost summer, and I like my face and thighs to not be attacked by my lovers gloriously thick facial hair. And so…good riddance!”

She stood up from her spot and patted Ben on the back. “Let me know when you are done, so we can hold a vigil.”

He narrowed his eyes at her, unamused. “Ha, ha very funny. A real comedian in this house.”

She bowed dramatically before turning on her heel and out the bathroom.

Looking back in the mirror, Ben let the razor hover for a moment.

“So long friend…maybe when I am in my old age, Rey will let you see the world again.”

“NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“Rey, tell Leia she is being ridiculous,” Han snapped to her. The young woman froze as she entered the dinning room, holding the salad she was helped prepare for the last Sunday dinner of the summer.

It was odd to think the summer passed by as quickly as it did. But not entirely surprising.

Rey and Ben fell into a routine over the last four months. For most of the week she interned at the local newspaper and spent a couple of afternoons at the auto shop. Since most schools were not in session, Ben spent his mornings writing and tutoring summer school kids and, surprisingly, working with Maz. She was getting older and needed someone big and strong like her dear Chewie to help at The Castel. Ben, obviously, did not want to be paid, Maz an old family friend. Instead she handed off the unsold pastries to him and Rey did not complain at all.
Weekends however, became reserved for family and close friends.

Rey never thought that would happen in a billion years, yet here she was making plans for weekly family dinners and having Saturday game night with Finn and Rose.

Such that Sunday when she was cornered by Han and Leia over a matter she should have no real say over.

She opened her mouth, unable to find words, until Leia cut her off.

“Ben, tell your father his health is what matters here.”

Setting the last plate on the table, Ben blinked, biting his lips together. “I—I don’t think Rey and I should have a real say on this matter…” His rather diplomatic sentence trailed off, unsure if he said the right answer for his and his partner’s sake.

Han clapped his hands together, standing up from the dining table. “See he agrees with me—”

“Oh, Han—the boy didn’t give a real answer,” she then turned to Ben with a pleased smile, “Very proud of how you handled that son.”

“Don’t encourage him,” Han shook his head, before looking at Rey. “Kid, you are supposed to back me up here—that’s what I get from this relationship, I now always have someone to back me up.”

Both Ben and Leia rolled their eyes with similar mumbles of disagreement. It wasn’t until Rey saw the mother and son interact on nearly a daily basis, did she realize their mirroring mannerism of displeasure. Exasperated sighs, mutters of know-it-all like comments, narrowing sharp brown eyes and pursed lips. Uncanny on occasion, but intriguing to see where Ben got his temper from…well now that she thought about it, Han was a pro at panicking rather than unmeasurable anger if she were completely honest.

Glancing at the three other faces in the room, Rey set down the salad bowl before taking a seat.

“I…think…” Out of the corner of her eye, Ben shook his head frantically. However, Han and Leia’s stares did not waver. “Chewie knows how to run the shop well and Kaydel knows the finances and the paperwork aspects…speaking as your long time employee and not your son’s partner…I think less hours might be good for you.”

Silence fell upon the table, everyone waiting with baited breath for someone to lash out…though it never came.

Instead, Han nodded in understanding, taking a seat. “And that is why she is my favorite. Doesn’t tell me ‘no’, but gives me a better idea.”

Leia shook her head fondly, before looking over at Rey. She mouthed a ‘thank you,’ Rey smiling in return. Across from her, Han began to prattle on about some customer’s issue or request, the conversation flowing naturally between the four.

Beside her, Ben sat down and grasped a hand under the table.

He squeezed once; she squeezed back.
“No—it’s not possible! I got her fixed as a puppy,” Ben grumbled into his hands. Lifting his gaze, he glared at Trixie and BB, who nudged each other affectionately. Beside them, Rey crouched down and unhooked Trixie’s leash, giving the pooch and affect kiss on the head.

Ben’s stubborn stare hardened. Leave it to Rey’s mutt—however much he liked the scrappy dog—to get his sweet, sweet, miniature schnauzer knocked up.

“I cannot argue with the professional, dear,” Rey shot back with a helpless shrug. “We’re going to be grandparents to puppies in about five months.”

Oh, god—they were going to have to travel to Oregon with a pregnant dog. He did not think of his dog expecting when both he and Rey were applying to grad schools.

“Yeah, grandparents, before we even have a kid of our own,” he mumbled off handedly.

Rey stilled, eyes wide, looking completely and utterly frightened.

He then understood the implication of his words.

“Not—not that I want kids now, or anything. Future—far, far future.” He waved his hand behind him, trying to shrug off the matter, but the piercing guilt in her eyes did not soothe him.

“Oh,” she breathed, standing up hastily, the little jiggle bells of her sweater tinga-linging as she moved. “So, you do want kids,” she stated, standing right in front of him, facing him fully.

“Well…” He stuffed his hands into his pockets, not understanding why he felt they were standing on the edge of somewhere unknown. He smiled softly down at her, hoping the tension in her shoulder would loosen if he acted relaxed. It didn’t. “Yes, I want kids one day. I thought we talked out about how I didn’t think they were all brats anymore—”

“But that’s different,” she interrupted, her voice quiet and fierce. “I mean, liking kids and then actually having kids—becoming parents, that’s something completely different.”

She was shrinking in on herself; Ben was becoming concerned. He rested a reassuring hand on her shoulder, trying to look into her turbulent hazel eyes. “Sweetheart, I understand that—”

“Ben, I never wanted kids,” she blurted out.

Okay…that unexpectedly hurt.

She stared up at him, her face crumpling as his fragile disappointment fell upon him without permission.

The dam broke loose. “I never wanted kids; I never wanted to be a parent. Hell, how can I be a parent if I don’t even remember my own parents,” she hiccupped, tears starting to pool, “I would get sick at the thought—”

“I know,” he said without realizing the words came from his mouth.

He did know, deep down. Sure, they mentioned kids and talked about their dislike for the youngsters, but there was something more to her reasons. She’d become tense whenever a kid ran by her downtown, or become deathly pale at the sound of a baby with their mother. She’d smile and be pleasant when forced to interact…but something about parenthood and children honestly
frightened Rey.

And he knew all along.

“I know,” he repeated, squeezing her shoulder. He swallowed tightly, her glossy eyes shining back in confusion. “And I am okay with that. If you don’t want kids, it’s ok—”

“No, no—don’t do that,” she grumbled stubbornly, jaw twitching unhappily. “Don’t do that thing where you try to make me feel better because I don’t want to feel this way, Ben.” She wiped her tears with the back of her hand. “I do want to have kids with you. I didn’t think of it seriously until you… I just,” she placed her hand on top of his, rubbing the back of his hand soothingly. “I just don’t know when I will be ready.”

“I can wait until you are eighty to have kids,” he joked lightly between teary chuckles.

“I don’t think either of us want to wait that long.” she rolled her eyes playful, sniffing slightly. “But… I am going to need time. Maybe years,” she then scoffed, crossing her arms over her chest. “Gosh, I sound heinous.”

“No, you don’t,” he told her, pulling her closer to him. Instinctively, she wrapped her arms around his torso while his arms wrapped around her shoulders securely. “You sound normal, you sound like you are thinking and being honest. That’s all I can ask.”

She buried her face deeper into his chest. “Hey?”

“Yeah?” He murmured, cheek resting against the top of her head.

“I love you,” she said nuzzling into him. “I love you more than I thought I was capable of.”

Inhaling deeply, Ben held her closer. He then spoke very quietly, into the loose wisps of her hair. “I love you…to infinity and beyond.”

A loud annoyed groan came from her instantly. Aggravated, Rey attempted to wiggle out of his hold. His grip did not relent as boisterous chuckles coursed through him.

“Ugh, you had to ruin it!” She cried out between bursts of giggles, her squirming against him hitting her tickle spots. “We were having a beautiful moment and you had to ruin it!”

“Of course! Would you expect anything less?”

His wide grin was wiped off by a tingling kiss, Rey bring him down to her level. He sighed happily in her embrace, nearly tripping over his feet as they stumbled into the bedroom.

For her, he’d wait forever to simply be in her arms.

“Why are graduation gowns so boxy?” Leia grumbled as she fluffed and shoved the fabric of Rey’s gown to the side, the winter winds making it difficult. “You’d think after all this time, they’d make something more practical.”

To her left, Ben peered down at his mother, his arm starting to become a dead weight around Rey’s waist.
“Mom, Mitaka will take the photo if you are ready or not,” Ben chided quietly, as his friend waved a few feet away.

“Fine, I am ready!” Leia declared to the relief of everyone in the photo.

“Okay, crowd a little closer together,” Miataka instructed, the Solos-Skywalkers and two Kenobi’s pushing closer together at his signal. “Goddamn, why the hell do Ben and his dad have to be tall?” He said, leaning back to capture everyone in the shot. “Alright, on three say ‘C’s Get Degrees’!”

“I have a 3.5—I did not get C’s!” Rey cried out indignantly between her bright smile.

“We know!” Finn called out from beside Mitaka, “No need to rub it in, Rey!”

In that moment, Mitaka took the shot—the first one of all the Solos, Skywalkers, and Kenobi’s together, Ben and Rey squashed in the middle of their affectionate and indifferent family members.

“Oh! This one is going in the wedding slide show,” Finn muttered to Mitaka, the man nodding enthusiastically despite both knowing Rey and Ben were not engaged…yet.

The group in the photo relaxed, Leia immediately pulling Rey into another warm hug. “Oh, we are so proud of you! Graduating and moving on to greater things!” She pulled back, frowning at her and then over her shoulder to Ben. “Do you two really need to move so soon? Right before the holidays?”

“Princess, we already promised them we are coming over with everyone else for New Years,” Han said exasperatedly, “They can’t change their move in date this close,” he reminded her softly, his own eyes reflecting a tinge of sadness over the news.

Ben squeezed her shoulder reassuringly; they wanted to get acclimated with life and new routines before Rey started grad school in the spring and Ben in the fall. It was a difficult decision but one they came to together.

“We will still call all the time,” Rey assured Leia, “You would forget we even left.”

“Oh, I highly doubt that,” the older woman shook her head knowingly. She sighed with a motherly smile, patting Rey’s cheek. “We need to get going back to house before everyone starts showing up for the party—”

“It’s a get-together,” Ben corrected, uncomfortable with the term ‘party’.

“It’s a party,” Leia repeated, already knowing this argument well. “We’ll see you two in a few.”

The older couple left, Luke and Kenobi trailing along with them after giving Rey hugs and words of congratulations. Rose and Finn then rushed forward with their own words of ‘goodbye,’ and life squeezing hugs. They departed with Mitaka in tow, the three laughing and joking along the way.

Most of the Fall Commencement graduates left the auditorium, only a few stragglers here and there.

Grabbing her hand, Ben led Rey back to the car. His hand was oddly clammy, though Rey chalked it up to a lingering cold. He was sick the previous week, going as far to seeing the doctor during the day. She told him she could drive him, but he insisted he could go alone for a mere cold. Wisely, she didn’t fight him on it.

The drive to the apartment was rather silent except for a few observational comments on their
family and friends—“Yes, Luke looks better. Not as haggard”, “No, I don’t like Mitaka’s new haircut. Great we are both in agreement on that.”

Entering the apartment, Rey went to the bedroom to change into something more comfortable than the dress and heels she wore to the ceremony. Ben lingered back, claiming he needed to feed the dogs.

Quickly, she changed into leggings and flowy gray, long sleeve tunic. As she pulled up her socks, she realized her favorite pair of ankle boots were nowhere to be found. Dropping on all fours, she ducked to check under the bed. Immediately she found one and then spotted the other in the far, far corner by the foot of the bed. Stretching, she reached for it—

Only to pull back an envelope instead. A faint memory of finding this exact envelope moments ago came to mind as she saw her name on the front in elegant script. Shoe forgotten, she flipped the envelope over and began opening it.

A neatly folded piece of paper laid inside, Rey carefully removing it. Unfolding the paper, she was greeted with bright red and black letters, molded together in flowing, painstakingly crafted calligraphy.

Her heart caught in her chest at the penmanship—she’d know that hand anywhere.

This was made by Ben.

“Against death and all oblivious enmity, shall you pace forth—”

Her vision blurred, Rey unable to finish reading the beautiful sonnet on the page. Briefly, she recalled their bond over Sonnet 55, both crying over it like fools and arguing like passionate believers over its meaning.

Scanning the piece, her eyes landed on the date on the bottom left corner.

October 10, 2018

That…that was over a year ago. That was before they even started dating the first time. Ben wrote their sonnet for her before they were anything, but mere friends. Mentor and Student, slowly becoming best friends. He loved her before he even knew it, before either could even acknowledge. Remembering their discussion of the sonnet was evidence enough—they wanted more but they never knew how.

But now, over a year later, they did.

Standing up shakily, she quietly walked out of the bedroom and into the hall.

“I just need to say it,” Ben’s voice carried down the hall from the living room. Rey slowed her pace, curious as to what he was talking about. “I just need to ask her to spend the rest of our lives together—easy right?” She stopped, blinking dumbly at his question. He must have been talking to the dogs; they had both caught each other having serious conversations with their canine family members. “But I know I’ll fuck it up BB, I know I will—every time I say something important I fuck it up and—”

“Then why don’t you try using this?”

Ben spun around, eyes wide as Rey held out the sonnet to him. A shy yet excite smile bloomed on her lips as his eyes bounced between her and the paper.
Recognition clouded his eyes, Ben licking his lips nervously.

He raked a quaking hand through his hair, taking a step forward. “It’s—it’s not the most romantic sonnet—or even a proposal type of sonnet—”

“I don’t care,” she said with a watery chuckle. “I don’t care at all because we love this sonnet and I love you and I want to spen—”

Ben clumsily dropped down on one knee, catching her hand holding the paper in his hand. “I can read the sonnet,” he said, trying to control his breathing, his hand still unbelievably clammy but now so was hers. Gently, he gazed back up at her, his dark eyes meeting her hazel openly. Without glancing at the paper, he recited the sonnet from memory, his eyes never leaving hers.

“Not marble, nor the gilded monuments Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme; But you shall shine more bright in these contents Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.”

Her shaky giggles interrupted him, Ben grinning back up at her.

“I knew you’d start giggling when I said ‘sluttish’,” he commented, his own tears starting to fall down his long face.

“I know,” she said unabashedly, before squeezing his hand. “Keep going.”

Taking a deep breath he continued, his gaze unwavering as he spoke every word as though it were his own. His own beating heart matched the rhythm of the sonnet, he breathing new life into the words she cherished since that night.

“When wasteful war shall statues overturn And broils root out the work of masonry, Nor Mars his sword, nor war’s quick fire, shall burn The living record of your memory:”

He paused for a moment, digging in his jacket pocket. He then pulled out a box, trying to open it and take out the ring with one hand, stubbornly refusing to release his hold on her. Sensing his struggle, Rey dropped down beside him and lifted the lid of the little ring box. She barely glanced at the ring before plucking it out and handing it to him, Ben already tossing the box aside in favor of holding the real ring.

Clearing his throat he spoke again, this time quite but fierce.

“’Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity, Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room Even in the eyes of all posterity That wear this world out to the ending doom. So, till the judgement that yourself arise, You live in this, and dwell in lovers’ eyes.”

Crying, Rey pulled him into a kiss. The two rocked for a moment on their knees from the momentum, before breaking away with breathy chuckles.

“Yes,” she said beaming at him, face red and wet from happy tears.

“I haven’t even asked the question!” Ben cried out, dropping his head to her shoulder. She cackled at this, carding her hands through his hair with muttered apologies. With a giant sigh, he lifted his head back up, holding the ring between them. “I want to be your lover in that sonnet and be with you for the rest of my life, please marry me?”

She nodded, crying more as he slipped the ring on her finger.

“I didn’t say no this time,” she joked lightly.
“Too soon!” Ben said wiping away both his and her tears, though laughed along.

“Oh my god, Ben!” she chided as she fell into his arms.

She held him tightly, breathing into his neck. Even though they had her graduation party to get to and half an apartment to still pack later that night, Rey did not want to be anywhere else but with Ben.

---

Three Years Later…

---

rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com

Subject: Can You Please Get Back To Me APSA

Ben,

I am going to be stuck at the office for next to eternity if I don’t get these articles proof read.

Can you do your wife a solid and read over three?

Rey

benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP

Are you fucking kidding me?

rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP

Ben,

No.

No, I am not.

Rey

benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP

No.
And why are you so formal in the email? It’s just me.

rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP

Ben,

You never know if they are monitoring emails or computers at work.

Rey

benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP

Yes, because wording formal emails to your husband is perfectly normal
and does not raise red flags.

Sure, Rey. IT and HR will totally believe that.

P.S. That was sarcasm.

rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP

Ben,

I know that was sarcasm, you nimwit.

Please, please, please, save your wife from article purgatory.

Rey

P.S. I KNOW YOU ARE NOT DOING ANYTHING. I JUST GOT AN EMAIL FOR AMAZON
THANKING ME FOR MY ORDER OF JOHN WICK ON DIGITAL DOWNLOAD.

P.P.S. And clearly I am not the one watching John Wick if I am drowning in work.

benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP

*Sigh* I guess.

*benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP
Wait—I ordered that right before you emailed me.

Are you trying to hand off your work so you can see shirtless Keanu Reeves sooner?

`rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP`

No.

Fuck. Yes.

I can’t help it—he looks like you!

`benjamin.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP`

YOU HAVE THE REAL THING AT HOME.

Why would you need to watch the movie if he looks like me? Hmmm?

`rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP`

`IF I HAD HELP, I WOULD BE ABLE TO GO TO MY REAL THING A WHOLE LOT SOONER.`

`rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP`

Babe…I am tired and I everyone in the office is already gone… :( I know it is not necessarily the right thing. But then again, not everyone has award winning authors as their husband so…

I don’t see the problem.

`benjamin.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP`

Fine. Send them to me.

Preferably in Google Doc form so I can make suggestions of edits and not ‘official’ edits because THAT IS YOUR JOB. ONE THAT YOU LOVE, need I remind you.

`rey.kenobi.solo@holo.com`

`RE: Can You Get Back To Me ASAP`
THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

Alright, I should be home in about an hour now :)

Love you, bye!

benjamin.solo@holo.com

RE: Can You Please Get Back to Me ASAP

See you then, sweetheart.

Love you, bye.

Chapter End Notes

And that is it folks!

The wonderful reylocaligraphy made a calligraphy piece of Sonnet 55 for this fic!

I would just like to say thank you to everyone who read the fic and went on this journey with me! I never thought this fic would become this long or this popular--in fact I thought no one would read my ridiculous little pen pal fic, hahaha. It wouldn't have became what it is if it weren't for all the wonderful and dedicated readers! Thank you for falling in love with these flawed characters and their little journey of self discovery and love!

And so for the last time--Love you, bye!
"How did you two meet?"

Sitting on opposites ends of the love seat, Rey and Ben glanced at each other.

The first time they looked at each other the entire session. Warm brown eyes locking on stubborn hazel; Rey still felt the ping of flutter in her gut. Nearly fifteen years of marriage and Ben’s eyes had a way of making her feel like putty by just latching on to her.

Just like when she met him in person.

Neither were keen on attending couple’s therapy; they’d gone to therapy on their own off and on through out the years, but never together. Never to fix their relationship.

If there was anything to be or could be fixed in their relationship.

Rey broke their staring match. Facing their counselor, Jannah, she remained at ease. Transparent yet guarded. Not letting a bit of herself slip through the cracks.

Ben’s tense gaze remained on her, no doubt knowing she was sinking back on herself. Like she
always did when uncomfortable.

“We met online.”

She flinched at Ben’s deadpan tone.

Jannah hummed, marking on her notepad. She did that a lot—humming and nodding. Patiently taking inventory, completely impartial to the evidence and information piling up. Just as she should be. Rey balked when Ben initially suggested Amilyn, going as far as saying his godmother could do over the phone and a few Skype sessions. As much as Rey adored Amilyn, she didn't need all their family and friends budding into their business.

She and Ben needed to work on themselves, without the village input.

So they went with the best person they could find with their insurance and within an hour’s drive away.

“A dating app?” Jannah asked, eyes darting between the two. “Or a dating website?”

“No, no,” Rey quickly corrected, shooting Ben a frown. He just had to answer in the vaguest way. Under her gaze he bristled at her, hunching and slumping closer to the arm of the love seat. Licking her lips, she faced their counselor at full attention. “It wasn’t like that. We weren’t actively seeking relationships or anything of the like. I need help with a writing assignment and my professor at the time was a dick—” Ben snorted behind his hand, but didn’t say anything else, “—so I reached out online and Ben answered. And one thing led to another and before you know it, a year and half later we’re married.”

Jannah grinned at the two. “A whirl-wind romance?”

“Something like that,” Ben grunted. He shifted in his spot, his eyes begging to interject.

Their counselor must have caught this, nodding for Ben to speak. “Anything you’d like to add?”

“Oh, yeah. I would.” Ben sat up, arms crossed over his broad chest. An anxious hand raked
through his salt and pepper hair, the stands flopping back against his ears pathetically. He needed to wash his hair, and she knew he hadn’t in days; he had a deadline a couple of days previous and merely hadn’t gotten around to it. Nothing out of the norm for him. “Her dick of a professor was actually my uncle who’d I’d been estranged from, I lived on the other side of the country, she also worked for my father who I was also estranged from, and I may have destroyed my grandfather’s legacy in her honor which involved shutting down a borderline historic literary journal.”

Across from them Jannah gapped, blinking slowly. “Those…those seem like important details.”

Rey gave a strained smile, hands fiercely gripping one another for dear life. “He also forgot to mention he somehow let my work fall into the hands of his former boss and let it be published without my authorization, running any chance—”

“I pulled it from publication—we’ve be over this a thousand times.”

“Or the fact that he agonized about his family, who I adore and had adored for a few years before even knowing him, and had been estranged from them for over ten years—”

“You know why I was!”

“But that still doesn’t change it!”

“Nothing can change it, Rey! It’s time lost and I am accepting that,” he spat.

“No, you are not because then we wouldn’t be here—”

“No, we are here because you don’t know how to fucking let go of the past—”

“We are here because you are an egotistical bastard!”

“And you are a selfish bitch, how about that?”

“Okay!” Jannah clapped her hands together, garnering their attention. “Okay…I can sense there is
some unresolved hurt here for reasons we maybe need to dig through, but this is what these sessions are for…” Their counselor set aside her notepad and sat forward, eyes of understanding locked on them. “I just need to know one thing—are both of you willing to work through this, be open and honest to one another? Are you willing to do what it takes to mend and build on this relationship…or is this just a stepping stone towards divorce?”

Rey inhaled sharply at the word.

“No.” Ben shook his head. “We aren’t getting divorced…I…” he blinked owlishly behind his glasses, “I…I can’t imagine my life without, Rey. I can’t…” he swallowed tightly, hands flexing at his sides, “I don’t like thinking like that.”

“And you?” Jannah implored to Rey.

“I…I don’t know.”

Beside her, Ben stood up and walked out of the room.

She didn’t go running after him.

“I can drive.”

“No it’s okay,” Ben shook his head, hands stuffed into his pockets, “I want to drive.”

“But you drove here.” Rey held her hand out for the keys. “Come on, Ben.”

“I said ‘I can drive’.” Reaching their car, Ben opening the driver’s side and slid in without sparing another glance her way.
Sighing, Rey walked around the car and climb into the passenger seat.

Together they sat in silence, Ben not starting the car.

“Ben—”

“Do you really want to divorce me?” he blurted out, voice heavy. He stared out ahead, downtown Lakeside quiet in the late afternoon. They had a forty-five minute drive waiting from them, but “To not be married anymore?”

“No,” she admitted softly. “That sounds weird and…like how you said, I don’t like thinking like that.”

“Then why didn’t you say anything?”

“Because…” She did not have the answer, but knew she had to assure him in some sort of way. To say maybe they’d be okay. “Because I never thought of life without you and for a moment I thought.”

“And?”

Her brows pinched, annoyed with how he was pressuring her. “And what?”

Ben’s hands rest against the wheel, clenching and unclenching. “And did you like the idea of it?”

“Ask me again tomorrow and maybe I’ll have answer because I still don’t know.”

Chewing on his lips, Ben nodded. “Okay…Okay. I can take that.”

With that, he turned on the car and began to drive home.
Nothing in particular necessarily happened to cause such a divide between her and Ben.

It was a bunch of little things piling up until suddenly she felt she was suffocating.

And Ben felt like he was suffocating, which then led to a blow up.

“It’s always about Ben, Ben, Ben! Ben needs to go to New York for some conference! Ben needs to meet with his editor, Ben needs to focus and lock himself up in his office for days on end because that is Ben’s work ethic! It’s not always about you Ben!”

“I’m sorry I have a job where I have to travel sometimes or be by myself,” he growled, “but it’s something I’m good at and I enjoy—I’m sorry you can’t say the same thing about yourself!”

“No, because I have a job where I can be with my kids and actually spend time with them than be off in my own fantasy world!” She shouted back, her eyes prickling with unshed tears. “If you don’t want to be with us—then don’t fucking be with us!”

He left after that.

Then came back an hour later with a bouquet of sunflowers and chocolate chips cookies from her favorite bakery downtown. With a quiet and patient air she accepted both. Put the flowers in a vase they were gifted some few odd Christmases ago and called the kids over to eat the cookies with them.

All was…okay.

But words were said, words that could not have been taken back and both knew it.
“At what point in your relationship did you two meet face to face?”

“We’d been pen-pals for two months,” Ben answered immediately. “Talking all the time—emails, texts, calls. Constant communication despite the distance.”

“Goddamn it, do you not see the fucking sign?” Ben shouted, throwing open the door to have a word or two with the kid’s parents. “It’s not that—”

His next words died on his lips when his saw it was not a child, but a young woman. Her back was turned to him, she watching as kids in various costumes ran down the street cheering and giggling. A duffle bag rested by her Converse clad feet and her oversized sweater obscured her frame.

Feeling his presence she turned around, Ben’s eyes connected with the familiar hazel he adored. He suddenly realized cameras did zero justice to her natural beauty. Her eyes far brighter in the warm glow of the porch light and backlight of the full moon. Her smile gentler in the flesh, Ben never sure if she earnestly smiled to him until this moment.

She…she had freckles…the most adorable light freckles, only seen in close proximity. God, he didn’t even know and...

“Hi.” She said, shifting from foot to foot under his awestruck gaze.

“Rey,” He breathed, his voice cracking a bit. “I…” He rubbed his eyes, confirming she was indeed there. In person. Standing right in front of him. “Wha—How?”

“She flew out to see me during her midterm break.” Ben seemed lost in the memory, staring off to the empty corner of the room. “And I knew even if I didn’t realize it then that I could never go back to the long distance friendship we had.”

“So you two were friends, first and foremost?” Jannah asked, pleased with this information.

“Yes,” Rey answered. “He was my best friend.”
“I can say the same,” Ben was quick to add on.

Jannah hummed, tapping her pen lightly on her notepad. “Can you say that about each other now?”

Rey kept her mouth shut.

Ben sighed.

“I don’t think I can say that about anyone,” he decided to settle on after a moment of silence. “I don’t think she can either. At least…as far as I know.”

Fiddling with her hands, Rey shook her head. “I don’t think I have a best friend.”

She felt Ben’s penetrating gaze, but ignored it.

“Then maybe you two should learn how to be friends again.”

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think!

Would y'all be down for something like this?

(And yes, the sequel WILL have a HEA)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!